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159

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No. 1.



CHAPTER I.



UTSIDE in the street the startling scene which had taken place on the stage a few minutes earlier was already beginning to have its boring side.

While the suddenly dismissed audience poured out of the theater they had entered but a scant hour before, and found themselves confronted anew with the problem which had seemed so satisfactorily settled—the problem of how to spend the evening—they discussed Georgette Verlaine's breakdown in tones which held a trifle of accusation, as much as to hint that she could have lost her memory and power of speech as well after the last act as after the first, if she had only given the matter a little careful consideration, which actresses never do.

In the theater, behind the scenes, where Georgette's mates were reappearing from their dressing rooms in ones and twos, their make-up hastily removed and street costumes donned, her complete mental collapse was being dis-

cussed from a more human standpoint, but still as a personal calamity in which she herself was not the person paramount. For they all saw that the engagement was ended. And what was to become of them?

"The poor dear! The poor dear!" cried a little ingénue heartbrokenly. But she showed where her thoughts were straying, borne there by sheer force of their heavy weight, in adding: "But I guess *she's* got wad enough stowed away to keep her on easy street, sunny side, illness or no illness."

"And what did the doctor say?" asked the leading man.

Under the leveling influence of pity and sorrow, he was talking to a stage hand with unusual democracy. The stage hand, who had chanced to be in the thick of the recent mêlée, and who felt that he was a leading man, too, for a moment, was answering with unction.

"What doctor?" some one threw in.
"How did he get here so quick?"
threw in another.

"I phoned him. Doctor John Congdon. He said," replied the stage hand, answering backward, and getting quite giddy looking from one to the other of his questioners, "as he didn't know."

"Didn't know what?" arose in chorus.
"What Miss Verlaine had, or how
she got it, or what to do for it, or how

long it would last."

"What did he know?" piped the little ingenue indignantly. "The poor dear!" "Knew that she ought to be took to her hotel right off. So he done it."

"Could she walk?"

"No, indeed!" sang out the stage hand as if repelling a dreadful insinuation. "She was carried, stiff as a sofa."

"The poor dear!"

By the end of another hour, Georgette, entirely forgotten by her audience, and in temporary eclipse in the minds of her company, came slowly and languidly back to remembrance, or partial

remembrance, of herself.

In regard to making homelike the gaudy barn of a hotel room, her maid had done what little there was to do—had torn covers from magazines in order to fashion make-shift shades for the glaring electric bulbs; had drawn the window curtains, and carried the heavy-odored flowers into a vestibule, leaving only some roses on mantel and

table.

"Leave her alone!" had ordered the doctor sharply, when she had made as though to remove from her stricken mistress the unspeakably jarring stage costume which she still wore. Fluttering her French hands remonstratingly, she had withdrawn herself to a far end of the apartment, outraged in all her Gallic sense of fitness. When a person had exquisite gowns for invalideric, also the bewitchingest of shoes, to match, it was a thousand tons of pities for that person to be prone on a couch still in bedizened fineries and painted cheeks, like a discarded, broken marionette.

Sometimes counting the respirations, sometimes listening to the heart action, occasionally giving a spoonful of restorative, but more often motionless as stone, John Congdon sat by the side of his patient, and studied the symptoms of her reawakening. Finally when

she opened her eyes and looked strainedly at him, he as movelessly stared back at her.

"That was my cue," she whispered,

trying to stand.

"You are mistaken," he said, putting her back on the pillow.

"What scene is on?" she asked, after

a pause.

"Perhaps the last one," he said, very deliberately.

The shock of this steadied her wandering wits.

"You mean?" she asked.

"That the curtain is rung down."

At the repeated brutality, or what sounded like brutality, the maid in the dim background of the room put out praying, appealing hands. But the doctor knew his patient.

"It is rung down,"

Georgette took her eyes from his face, and let them travel around the room.

"I am not at the theater," she said dazedly. Then: "I am home. Home!" Lastly she sat up reelingly, and caught at the arm of his chair to steady herself. "Oh, John Congdon, don't tell me that it has come!"

"What do you mean by 'it'?" he

probed.

"What I have feared."
"What have you feared?"

Here the shadowy maid flung out her hands again. "Get out of the room!" he ordered. He was a man who never had to speak twice, not even to women, and the maid took a swift exit, looking as if her mistress was thrown to the lions—which was about so.

Strengthened by sudden passion, Georgette rose to her feet, and paced up and down the room, pelting the doctor with furious phrases of negation, as if

in answer to his very silence.

"I am not ill—nor worn out. There is absolutely no need for me to rest. No sense in it! None! Never will I leave the stage at this very moment of my best success. And my mind is not tiring itself out. It is not! Nor am I burning the candle at both ends. Not too much, at any rate. I simply refuse to regard a transient weakness as serious." These things she said again and again, angered

as a panther, and as restless. Next, one of her lightning changes came to her, and she stopped by his chair, bending down to him as caressingly as a child, saying softly, under her breath: "John Congdon, tell me what to do!" The words were given to him like a

He set his mouth. "Go and sit down on that sofa!" he commanded.

As she falteringly began to obey, he changed his order: "Go first to that glass, and take a good look at your-

So she went, instead, to the mirror, where the sight of her own reflection filled her with angry disgust.

"What a Meg Merrilees," she whispered feverishly, and, with creams and towels, proceeded to cleanse her face. After one or two futile pats at her hair, she gave up trying to preserve its elaborateness, so pulled it loose, and plaited it down her back. As she studied this new reflection, all the while perfectly regardless of the watchful stoic in the armchair, her anger faded into perplexity, and perplexity into fear.

"What is the matter with me?" she asked finally. "What am I to do?"

"Go and sit down on that sofa, as I told you." The mirror had done a great deal of his talking for him, as he knew it would.

"I look forty years old," she said, taking the bidden seat, and gazing at him imploringly for contradiction.

"Nearer fifty." After dropping this remark, he waited in his usual taciturn fashion for it to strike a vital spot.

She twisted her thin, pretty hands in the lace of her gown. Then she exploded nervously:

"Well? Well? The sentence? Get at it!"

"I've told you often enough."

He looked at her restless movements with the analytical interest he would have bestowed upon a bug which was pinned to a paper. He freely conceded her charm, just as he would have conceded the iridescence and fragility of the bug's wings.

"And if I don't rest?" she flung an-

grily.

"You may get locomotor ataxia, for one thing.'

"Nonsense! Only bad old men get that.'

"Why not bad young women?"

"John Congdon, stop! I'm not bad, and you know it!"

"Are you a good young woman?"

"You know I am."

"What is good about you? Do you call your vain, frantic, painted aim to be a 'star' good? Look at this room you live in. Do you call this gilt-ceil-inged attic good? How about the hours you keep? Do you call them good? And the fat-pursed, thin-brained men who hang around-how good are they? See the gown you have on-low-shouldered, and needing gasolining at the hem—is that good? You go joy riding all night, and greet the grand old sun with a blink. Is that good? You listen by the hour together to speeches of half gallantry, whole impudence; you fling back witty, heartless parries. And you call yourself good! As if a woman is good just because she keeps out of the world's gutter. There's no complexity about a woman's goodness. It is as plain a duty as daylight. You, good! Where is your home garden, your flowerlike children?"

"Flowerlike fluff! Where are yours?" "In my heart of dreams, at any

"Keep them there. Their shoes will cost less."

"And if not locomotor ataxia," he resumed evenly, "you will lose your mind -what you have."

Again he paused, and his silence was terribly significant to one who knew him as she did.

"Lose my mind." The words were echoed blankly. Then, not passionately, but as slowly and quietly as grain falling under the knife, she shuddered down among the pillows, hiding her face, and whispering: "I knew it! I knew it!"

When she lay flatly prone and quivering, he shoved back his heavy chair gratingly. Then he deliberately walked over to the piano, opened it, and played

methodically, although without missing a note, "Du Bist Wie Eine Blume."

As he bent lovingly over the keys, making them sing slowly and deeply, it seemed as though he had nothing else on his mind except the pleasant task of seeing how close his hands could come to making the notes say the words of Heine's that are wedded to them.

When he finished and went back to his chair, Georgette was sitting up, pale

and conquered.

"I will do as you advised," she said. "I was prepared for that," he said, taking a letter from his pocket, "two weeks ago. So I wrote to them. And they will have you."

"Kind of everybody, all round," she said, her lip curling. "Suppose you

explain."

'They are farmers. I am going to send you to their farm. You are going to stay there for four months."

"Off and on," she threw in firmly. "On," he corrected stonily. "Four solid months, at the very least."

"I couldn't stand it," she cried, her

foot tapping the carpet.

"You must, and will. Rest and change are the only things to cure you. They must be absolute. You are not to take your maid with you, or to have your letters forwarded, or to write letters, or to get phone messages, or wires."

"But, instead of these diversions-

what?" sarcastically angry.

"You are to go to bed with the chickens-

"Same roost, or separate?" furiously.

"Rise with the sun-

"I simply will not." She fought his earnestness desperately.

"Drink milk-

"I loathe and despise it." "Eat bread and butter-

"I can see myself! I can see my-

"Have dinner at noon-"

"Absurd! Only horses eat dinner at noon."

"And a light supper at night." The

regimen was finished.
"I couldn't live!" declared she stub-

bornly.

"Rache and Horry live."

"Who?" She locked her hands around her knees, and her eyes danced.

"In the census, they are probably known as Rachel and Horace Dorn-

blazer.'

"They should stay in the census. So I am to live for a while with Rache and Horry?" She mentioned them as if they were trained pigs.

"If they can stand you," said John Congdon thoughtfully.

"'Horry Dornblazer.' What a dam-

nable name!"

"Let me advise you not to say 'damnable' in Horry's hearing. He might not think you the good young woman you claim to be."

"And what do I care?"

"Nothing, now; but a great deal, soon -you'll be made over new.'

"Is Rache his sister?"

"Rache is his wife. If you are already contemplating the refreshment of a flirtation with Horry, let me tell you you can't do it. Save yourself the worry."

"Flirtation! You must think there is

nothing else in my head."

"Nor is there. You would flirt with the afternoon shadow of a wooden Indian in front of a cigar store."

"Not if there was a tailor's dummy on the same block," was her winning defense.

"Well, there's no tailor's dummy at

Crooning Water."

"Crooning Water? The name of the farm?"

"Yes."

"Very pretty. He's something of a

"She named it. And she's nothing of a poet. That is how she managed to hit on so pretty a truth as 'Crooning Water.' It is the brook that croons, day and night. It runs through the farm. You can busy yourself keeping the children out of the brook."

"Horry's children?"

"Also Rache's. There are two of them. At least, there were. But that's over a year ago. There may be three."

"As regular a crop as that?"

"Their names," he went on stolidly,

"are quite pretty. But I've forgotten. Cityfied names-ending in 'ine.'

"Gasoline and Vaseline."

"Georgette," he said suddenly, "is there no gentle spot in your heart?"

"Only the one you occupy," she said

pleasantly.

They gazed at each other so stonily and steadily that their eyes seemed to shoot sparks like flint. Then she gradually let amusement creep into hersand something more—so that he finally

"You are not safe," he accused. "Not at all safe. Why, why-" He appeared to be struggling to keep back something terrible. But it finally shot out: "Why, for the moment, I wanted to kiss you. I wanted to kiss you!"

"Well, why didn't you?" she questioned indifferently. "Every man I meet

kisses me, sooner or later."

"With me it will be later," he announced coldly.

She dealt his security a blow:

"Not if I decide in favor of sooner." On the point of contradiction, he studied her intimately, and then said

shortly: "Granted."

"But there is not the slightest danger of my so deciding," she said coolly. Insolence acted as a tonic to her, and she looked bright and well. To punish him thoroughly for the "later," she explained: "I only let real men kiss me. You are a doctor; that bars you out, you see, A doctor is a sort of a cross between a trained nurse and a parish priest."

"Take only your very plainest frocks and things to Crooning Water, for you will probably have to wash them yourself. There is no laundry in that part

of the world."

"Trained nurse, parish priest, and parlor maid. Also, the undertaker's hope. What sort of women fall in love with you, doctor? What do they call you? Johnny, or Jack?"

"What do you call me?" he sug-

gested.

"Down," she said.

With the smile still on her lips, and so easily that it looked more like makebelieve than the real thing, she fell

quietly over in one of her sudden faints. He caught her in his arms, her long, swinging braid of hair twisting over his wrist like a hand. Feeling herself carried to the sofa, she said evenly, though out of the depths of utter unconsciousness:

"Now, you can go to the piano, and play some more. John, don't let me die —will you, John? I don't want to die. How well you play the piano, John!" With a deep sigh, she sank into mute-

"Jane, Cora-whatever your name is -come in here," ordered Congdon of the retirement where the maid was.

"Cora," she said politely, appearing. Then, with real feeling: "Oh, the poor sufferer! My sweet Miss Georgette! What is it I might do for her?"

"You might hold your tongue, and

loosen her dress."

While swiftly working among a multitude of phials in his case, he was thinking thriftily ahead: "This sort of thing is capable of worrying Rache. I don't know that it will; but it may. I'll write her a few directions to-night." Then, aloud: "Stop putting that pillow under her head. If you must put it somewhere, put it under her feet. What time is it?"

"Five minutes after the eleven," said Cora, flurriedly ramming the pillow out

of sight beneath the lounge.

"Get her to bed as soon as you can -she is coming out of the faint-and then pack her trunk-with stout, sensible shoes, and short-skirted, washable dresses."

"She has none-of either." Cora re-

pelled both insults.

"I might know it. Do the best you can, then. The chief point is to have all in readiness by two to-morrow. She is going into the country-and you are not going with her."

"The extraordinary things to tell me," cried Cora, flitting them from her with the back of her hand, as if they had been bats. "La, la, la-la-la!

what is she going to do there?" Doctor John Congdon, at the doorway, taking his usual abrupt, unceremonious leave, stopped to cogitate.

"You have happened to hit upon a very sensible question, my good girl," he said frowningly. "Very sensible. There is no predicting what she is going to do there."

Then he went.

CHAPTER II.

The whole company went down to the Hoboken ferry to see Georgette off, turning that dingily prosaic place into a fairyland of laughter, bonbons, bouquets, auto horns, assorted chocolates, magazines, and pet dogs on ribbons.

Georgette was soon ensconsed, in queenly elevation, on a stool upon the observation platform of the Pullman car, her adherents being bunched below her, getting their farewells ready.

As the train moved off, she stood up radiantly, and flung kisses to them, calling: "'Give my regards to Broadway! Remember me to Herald Square!"

When there was no one left to fling kisses to, no one to see whether she was pink or pale, well or weak, Georgette turned blindly, and tried to get within the car before she should fall. Its momentary dimness and closeness crushed her like a tumbling wall. As she swayed off into unconsciousness, she felt herself held and protected, and she knew—through the spirit, being in the depths of her swoon—whose were the arms which carried her to her seat.

"Just like you, to be up somebody's sleeve all the time, John," she murmured, in fragments of dead speech. "Kind of Jack-in-the-box, or Johnnyon-the-spot. I'm so glad! Keep me

alive-won't-you?"

Guarding her so from publicity that no one in the car knew of her illness, he sat beside her, and did what he could to help; fanning her, taking her tight little gray gloves from her hands, letting the reviving air blow in from the window, cajoling her into swallowing a few drops of water into which he had dissolved a powder. When the film passed from her eyes, and the soft gleam of life came back, he moved from her side to the seat facing her, upon which were piled the parting gifts of

her friends. He sorted these methodically, and, in a matter-of-fact way, threw out of the window everything which met with his disapproval.

"Don't!" was her first conscious word, as a bunch of hothouse tuberoses hurtled into the scenery. "What an incarnate meddler you are!"

"Thank you!"

A softer expression crossed her face. "It is good of you to be here. Where were you all the time?"

"You mean while those apes, and calves, and puppies were kissing you good-by?" He classified them without the least rancor.

"There were one or two cats in the menagerie, too," she said coldly.

"I was here in the car, waiting for just what happened. I well knew you would use up all your nerve force in making a suitable final impression."

"Why do you say 'final'? Will I go into one of those faints some day and never come out?" she asked listlessly.

"No. Not now, that you have done the sensible thing for once. To save you from fright, let me tell you that you will be worse the moment you get into the quiet of the country. It will be an unscrewing of the strings. When they are ready, they will tighten up of themselves, and be tuneful. Nor are you going to go insane. Take that out of your head. I said you would if you kept the pace. And you would. It's the infernal life you lead—a life of flightiness, froth, and flather."

"Oh, F, F, F!" she said impatiently. "Fiddlesticks, fritters, and French fried flummery. I wish you would stop gibing at my profession."

"I am not gibing at it. I am gibing

at the way you take it."

She put up her fancy-shod toe, and disdainfully prodded at a man's coarse sweater which was among her things.

"You may send that after the tube-

roses. It's not mine."

"Yes, it is—rather, it is mine. I brought it for you to wear when you ride down to Crooning Water. Knew you'd be foolishly dressed. Crooning Water is cold. It is not New York."

"No?" she asked, arching her brows, as if incredulous.

"No. By the way, have you any idea of how to get there?"

"Go to Crooning Water, and then get off."

"Nothing of the sort. The station is Creston."

"Aren't you coming?"

He looked at her almost angrily. "Certainly not! I bought my ticket only to the first stop. We are slowing down for it now."

"You speak as if you were glad to go. Don't you like my manner?"

He stopped to be sure. "No," he said. "I don't think I like you at all, Georgette."

She laughed lazily. "Why are you

kind to me, then?"

Again he stopped to think, answering slowly: "Lots of us may not like certain children, yet we are kind to them, because they are children. Somebody must be kind to you, Georgette."

"The puppies are kind, and the apes

especially."

He stood in the aisle. "Good-by, Georgette." He bent his head to hers. "Why," she said, in an affected, child-ish treble, "I truly fink it's to be 'sooner'!"

"Anything but!" he exclaimed angrily. His back was squared defiantly as he turned it upon her, and strode down the aisle. The same vanishing back was all she saw on the platform when she looked from the window, hoping to wave an ironic farewell.

"And that is the last well-tailored coat I am to see for four months!" she sighed, as she settled sleepily down for her long ride. "The coats to come will

all be home grown."

On the whole, she stood the threehour journey better than she hoped, interested, in spite of herself, by the beauties of the Delaware Valley, marveling at the lush newness of the spring tints

As late afternoon drew on, the chill of the air became freshly manifest, taking some of the farce out of John Congdon's sweater, which she eyed with an ever less disfavor. Then, at last, the conductor strode through the car, with his sulkily begrudging admission: "The next station at which this train will stop is Creston!" and she found herself at the end of the beginning.

Assisted by the patently smitten brakeman, she and her various belongings were landed upon the station platform. She was the only passenger to alight, and it seemed to her as though the locomotive, panting on a curve, had turned its head sulkily around to puff reproaches at her for the delay.

The station agent and his helpers worked busily over the freight, politely unseeing, though she could not have been more noticeable in her fluttering gray loveliness than if she had been in spangled gauze and waving pink wings. She sized up her location, and found things quite as bad as she had expected. Creston was simply a big wooden station on one side of the track, and a big wooden inn on the other, beyond which was a meek store, clinging quite timidly to the side of the mountain, as if it had climbed up there in a fit of delirium, to scan the valley for customers, and, in the shock of not finding them, had never been strong enough to let go, and climb down again.

Sated at the very start with the scenery, Georgette waited till the station agent made his fifteenth run past her; then she put out her hand like a semaphore, flagged him, and got him.

"How am I to find Crooning Water?"

she asked.

He looked down at her shoes, rapidly determined their unwalkable quality, and said at once: "Why, I don't know!" His gentle amiability was worse than any roughness, for it said conclusively: "I'm completely done now, and it's your turn."

"Can I hire a carriage anywhere?"

The station agent looked very carefully into the sky, as if scanning the condition of a heavenly livery stable; then, apparently finding the celestial stalls all empty, said:

"Why, no."

Here the freight agent broke in, talking to nobody in particular, speaking a trifle apologetically, as if his remark was a babble which was foreign to the occasion:

"The cart from Crooning Water's

tied up back of the tank."

"That so?" asked the station agent pleasantly. Then: "Why, sure! Here's

the man now."

Georgette looked, and saw lunging rather consciously toward her a man in dusty overalls, and a shirt of stuff so stanchly striped that it glared like a

porch awning.

"I wonder where they buy that hideous cloth," she thought enviously. "If I wanted some of it to dress a character part, I'd have to chase all over New York, and come home without it."

"Are you the man from Crooning Water?" she asked him crisply.

"Why-er-yes," he temporized. To make positively affirmative statements was not a country trait, so it seemed.

"Were you sent to bring me over?"

"Are you Miss Verlaine?"
"Yes," she said dryly. She was getting tired of standing. "And these are

my things.'

She pointed to her bridallike array of wilted bouquets, boxes of candy, stocks of magazines, pale-gray suit case, and pearl-handled umbrella-also John Congdon's prison-barred sweater, which spread protectingly over them, like a horse blanket.

The man from Crooning Water obediently looked at them. After he had looked long enough, he looked away.

"Well, can't you pick them up?" demanded Georgette, at the end of her short patience.

"I suppose so," he ventured.

Presently a slow revealment of her wishes came to him, and he loaded himself with her affairs, and carried them away. Presently, with comfortable creaks, the cart drove up, and stopped. Her man jumped from its seat, and

"Why, I can't-and won't-mount a trapeze like that!" she flamed.

At this, the man leaned restfully against the wheel. To his mind, the predicament had been made by her, and was hers to issue from. The leisure was fairly his, and he took it. Finally he bethought himself to offer a certain excuse for the indignity of the cart.

"I thought likely you'd have a trunk,

Miss Verlaine."

"I have!" was her startled remembrance. She handed him the check.

He lunged easily off, and in a moment came lunging as easily back, with her mountain of baggage on top of him. This he slid thumplessly into the cart.

"Here," she said, touched at the performance's rare carefulness. She drew from her purse a whole fifty-cent piece,

and tendered it.

He put out his hand to take it; but, just short of touching it, asked courteously:

"What for?"

"The trunk," she explained. He withdrew his hand.

"There was no charge on it. It came checked through," he assured her.

"No steam laundry, and no tips. This may be heaven, and this may be hell," thought Georgette. Then, aloud, and tentatively, as she eyed the wagon seat: "How does a creature that is not a monkey—nor a man—get up there?"

"She puts her foot here, and here,

and here."

Following this rather meager direction, Georgette finally "arrived" at her shaky perch; and, as they started their slow crawl down the mountainside into the valley, even took a certain sort of pleasure in its high, front prominence, which gave her an interesting sensation of participating in the sudden freaks of the road.

A caprice struck her.

"I want to drive!" she announced.

"Give me the reins,"

Her hands went out for them. At that tone of her voice, princes had been known to be obedient.

This man drove on, not even turning

his head.

"No," he said. "These horses are not as safe as they look. They have

to be managed."

She took cold pains to be mute from that moment on. They creaked steadily downward for the greater part of an hour, then turned off from the highroad into a private lane, through the trees of which a spiral of blue smoke showed.

"Rache getting supper," thought

Georgette hopefully.

"We've been an hour going three miles and a half," she said sarcastically, "How long would those fiery, untamed steeds have taken had they not been 'managed'? Fourteen hours?"

"About fourteen minutes," answered the man stolidly. "Which is exactly what I have been guarding against.'

Here the house came, of a sudden, into full view, set in a bower of apple trees, some of them still showing pink boughs of blossom. It was unpainted, apparently not through neglect, but by design, so that it should nestle unstartingly against its leafy background.

"Crooning Water," said the man introducingly, the first spark of life in his tones. "It has a kind of rambling ten-dency."

"Then it had better restrain itself," commented Georgette critically. "If it rambles a hair's breadth, even in its

dreams, it will tumble flat."

And her comment was not without reason, for the house showed a series of unarchitectural new additions to an ancient nucleus built of primitive mud and stone. Each addition took an independent angle of its own, and the unifying porch had to perambulate around all sorts of corners in order to preserve its continuity.

Standing on this porch were two fashionably dressed little tots of girls, and a sunbonneted, gingham-clad young woman, whose strong arm lightly held a spick-and-span baby-a regular prize winner for fatness and fairness. One of the little girls was, perhaps, five years old; the other, three; and both were sturdy and handsome. Each little head was topknotted with a big bow of ribbon, and was held with a free and easy tilt, which was less pert than aristocratic. The family quartet was arranged in formidable welcome.

Georgette's jehu jumped down, and held the horses, leaving her to dismount by herself.

Seeing this, the young woman said:

"Hold Homer, Pauline," and dumped the baby of one year into the arms of the baby of five, who clasped it with motherly capability. Then she ran out to the cart, and offered Georgette her hand, the whitest, firmest, shapeliest hand in the world.

"Let me help you, Miss Verlaine, I

am Rachel Dornblazer."

"Is not," immediately said the three-year-old. "'At's marma."

"And who are you?" asked Georgette, shaking hands with her hostess. She was agog to learn the second "ine."

But the child buttoned up its full, red lips, and was demurely silent, its conversational power, so far, being strictly limited to contradictions.

"That is Rosine," said the mother. She looked at her three children contentedly, as well she might. Her pride in them had caused her to array them exhibitionally, in their best; she herself had not had time even to slip off the ample apron which she wore. Yet apron. gingham, and sunbonnet all failed to

dim Rachel Dornblazer's serene beauty

-hazel-eyed, creamy-fleshed, full-bos-

omed, she vied with the fruiting apple trees in fresh, natural, generous charm. "Come right to your room, Miss Verlaine," she said. "You look tired. Horace always takes so long to drive a person down from the station they get here

all tuckered out."

Georgette turned around and took a good look at her driver, the first she had really given him, for, though she could appreciate the good points of a man in uniform-even in livery-she literally and truly never before had had eyes for anything in overalls.

Horace accepted her gaze as an introduction, and gravely lifted his hat. He might that moment have met her. The face which composedly took her accusing scrutiny was lean and reserved, of a fine, baffling type, and strikingly good-looking.

"I am afraid I was rude," she said at length, and none too apologetically. Horace Dornblazer's attitude of mind during the ride down had been too much what she would expect to find in an equal—and that an equal could

wear overalls seemed an annoying impossibility, "I wonder what you must have thought of me!"

"Nothing at all," said Horace Dorn-

blazer courteously.

And as she followed Rachel into the house, the words echoed in her ears, and echoed maddeningly, shorn of all their courtesy.

CHAPTER III.

Georgette looked around her new room in a state of mind bordering upon horror. That everything was clean and sweet, that the apartment had all the rural points of excellence which go to make up a "guest" room, wholly escaped her observation. But the oddities did not. Such crudity she had not been accustomed to.

"And where do I put my hat?" she shivered, holding the feathered gray cartwheel in her hand, and gazing hope-

lessly around her.

"You stand that up, on its rim, atop of the shelf," answered Pauline respectfully from the doorway, where she quietly appeared, Rosine in her wake.

"Don't, either," said Rosine.

"Marma sent me up to say 'at supper's on the table," continued Pauline. "Tissun't," murmured Rosine.

Pauline patiently explained: "Rosine, some's on the stove, hotting, where it has to be. The rest is on the table."

Having an innately peaceful disposition, quite at variance with her style of speech, Rosine let this statement pass unchallenged.

Pauline, struck with the new arrival's gorgeous head of hair, walked once deliberately all around her, surveying it

from sides and rear.

"I think you're pretty," she concluded, the emphasis plainly showing that somebody downstairs did not.

"So marma doesn't like me?" asked Georgette shrewdly, as she thought. She

whirled her hat to the bed.

"Yes, marma does. She said: 'Isn't she pretty!' And dadda said: 'She's too old.' And marma said: 'She's still young. Horace; but she's sick.' Are you sick?"

"Yes," said Georgette, studying herself in the glass. Too old?

"How old is 'still young'?"
"About ten years too much."

"Are you ten years too much, Miss

Verlaine?

"Not when I can help it." She poured some toilet water into her palm, freshened her face with it, and then powdered lavishly. "Take me to supper," she said, offering a hand to both children.

Rosine clutched at once, but Pauline

asked curiously:

"Are you going downstairs floured, Miss Verlaine?"

"It seems not," said Georgette, whisking impatiently at her face.

Pauline heaved a satisfied sigh. "I

thought you weren't."

The supper was an astonishment to Georgette; she never knew there were so many things that she could not eat. There was a dish of radishes, a dish of spring onions, a dish of clabbered sour milk, a dish of stewed rhubarb, a plate full of fried eggs, a towering stack of hot biscuits, a tray piled with thick slabs of gingerbread, and plenty of weak tea. These viands disappeared very heartily, but without any assistance from her.

Rachel, in a sunbonnet, was comely enough; but Rachel, without it, sitting at the head of her table, and mothering

her children, was beautiful.

Homer graced the board with his elders, wabbling decorously in a high chair, and mumbling a cracker. His varied emotions occasionally made him quiver, and occasionally caused him to break out in a wide, silent smile; but never, never made him audible.

There was evidently no maid of any description, for when plates were to be changed, it was miniature Pauline who changed them, moving capably around the table, its height all but extinguishing her, so that her topknot of ribbon seemed to crawl around the edge all of itself, like a butterfly, her small hand appearing at the right intervals, and safely clutching a plate into invisibility.

Horace, still in the overalls and the

porch awning, sat opposite Rachel, and out-Homered Homer when it came to taciturnity, contributing neither quiver nor smile to the entire proceedings. Yet there were an alertness and dignity about his personality which made him an exceedingly alive figure.

"Come upstairs, Miss Verlaine," Rachel said suddenly. "Horace, see that the children finish their supper

properly.'

"No," stammered Georgette vaguely.

"No!"

"Come upstairs!" repeated Rachel firmly. "Lean on me. It is just a short little climb. I can almost lift you. Now you are in your own room. Lie right down. I am here—don't be frightened."

While drifting away in the swoon which Rachel had foreseen—one of the world's mothers was Rachel—Georgette said clearly: "I can make that mutt in overalls sit up and take notice, and I'm going—to do it."

"What is it, you poor, pretty child?"

asked Rachel.

But she got no response. So she quickly gave what little help was to be given, and then methodically set to work tidying up the room, putting away the scattered hat, and coat, and sweater, and deftly emptying the contents of the suit case into the bureau drawers.

"Lie still, don't talk, and let me undress you," were her quiet directions when she saw the girl on the bed sigh

and move.

"I know better than this," commented Georgette apologetically, while letting her hostess pull out hairpins and

pins.

Rachel went carefully through drawers and suit case, looking for a night-gown. Not finding the object of her search, she left the room, and came back with one of her own.

"What's that wonder?" inquired Georgette, sitting up, completely revivi-

fied.

The garment was of stout muslin, with a double-lined yoke, a double-lined, rolling collar as big as a sausage, and long, baggy sleeves, flnished off with a durable cuff. Written on the

yoke in indelible ink was the legend:

"Rachel D., No. 5."

"Remove it!" ordered Georgette positively. "If I should die in the night, and go up to Saint Peter in that, it would take me a month of Sundays to explain."

"I did not want to bother you for your trunk key," said Rachel, "and you

have no gown in your grip."

Georgette wandered over to the bureau, and took out a filmy whiff of white silk, heavy with fine lace, and odorous with violet sachet. The whole thing would have slipped through a napkin ring.

"Why tell stories?" she asked grave-

ly, waving this trophy.

"Do you sleep in that?" asked Rachel, awed. "I thought it was a princesse slip, for a party dress." Then, with quick feminine delight: "Oh, do put

it on, and let me see you!"

She sat impulsively down on the floor, merely a girl, in spite of her three children, and hugged her gingham knees, her stout-leather shoes very much in evidence, as she watched Georgette's disrobing act. Her serious face was shining with interest.

"I've heard of silk nightgowns," she

said quaintly.

"I'll give you some of mine," was

"Oh no!" cried Rac

"Oh, no!" cried Rachel, crimsoning visibly. And it came to Georgette that the blush was for the gown's short sleeves and open neck.

Rather weary of the whole situation, she flung herself down upon the bed, her face hidden in the pillow, her wealth of hair lying across her in heavy

strands.

When downstairs, after she had undressed the children and put them to bed, and had cleared the supper table, and had laid her kindling in the kitchen stove for morning, Rachel came into the room where Horace sat at his nightly reading—rather an unusual visit for her.

"She's nice, isn't she?" she asked, leaning her head against the wall, and

yawning.

Among kings and queens, long and

graciously dead, of early French history, Horace came back but reluctantly to the present. His eyes, dreamy, yet passionate, filled with the pageantry and tragedy of the past, gazed at Rachel rather uncomprehendingly for a while; then he said shortly, too shortly, a fine observer would have thought:

"Oh, her! To be honest, Rache, I think she is not 'nice' in the least."

"Why, Horry!" exclaimed Rachel, yet as tolerant of this defection even as any woman is tolerant when her husband does *not* like some charming sister woman. "What makes you say that?"

"Well, for one thing, I fancy she is coarse." To any one who cared to notice, it was evident Horace had been putting thought upon the woman who

was not nice.

"Coarse, Horry! She is as delicate

as a sprig of heliotrope."

"And she plainly does not like children."

"There you are quite wrong, Horry; she has hardly taken her eyes off ours."

"To be amused at children's antics is not liking them. But we ought not discuss her. Rache, you are so tired, would it not rest you if I read to you a little?"

"Well—" she said dubiously. Then, with magnanimous self-denial: "All right, Horry." And she settled her head more restfully back against the wall,

her eyes closing.

Awake to the finger tips, suffering and exulting with the France who resisted the Louis who was "the state," Horace read several pages with rapid clearness. At a crisis in the heroic struggle, he lifted glowing eyes to Rachel, to win from her a word of living interest.

He got it:

"Horry—let me interrupt you, dear—did you feed the little pigs?"

"Don't I always?" he asked, a trifle

bewildered.

"Yes; but I was upstairs to-night, and wasn't sure. I couldn't go to bed thinking the little things were hungry. What you read was lovely. Thank you."

Seeing that she was done, if he was not, he slowly shoved the book aside.

Rachel rose with alacrity.

"She has the most beautiful stockings, Horry," contributed Rachel, going back to the guest whose breakfast was on her mind, "with hand-embroidered flowers on them. And the wonderfulest underclothes! Like the trousseaus that you read about in the papers. And, Horry, I wish you could see the nightgown! It is silk, and has short sleeves, and ribbons, and lace, as if it was a party dress."

"Rache!" he cried, in annoyed protest. "I don't think you ought—I sometimes wish, Rache, that you——" He killed both sentences of unkind criticism at their birth, and rose abruptly, holding the lamp to light her upstairs. "I know you are worn out, Rache.

Good night."

"Good night, Horry." Rachel had almost gained her room when she called softly: "Horry!"

"Yes?"

"Don't walk through the hall in your boots to-morrow; you get up so early; and I want she should sleep."

Which is exactly what Georgette did. The balm-laden air of the mountains folded her quietly as in soft wings of healing, so that she never heard the far-off panting of the trains as they journeyed all night through the gorges, never heard the evening whippoorwill crying from the orchard, never heard the tree fights of the squirrels at dawn, never heard the cheerful "Bob White!" in the new of the morning. When she saw she had neglected to wind it, and it had stopped.

"And there's no telling if it's the overture or the last act," she murmured,

dressing.

When she got downstairs, Rachel hurried in, and began setting out the second breakfast. Using the tail of her eye, Georgette was pained unspeakably to see the onions, the lettuce, the radishes, the clabber, the rhubarb, the fried eggs, and the biscuits all making a matinée reappearance. Seating herself in lonely state at the table, she be-

stowed her devotion upon the coffee and a frilly kind of pancake. Rachel fried them in the adjoining kitchen, and Pauline staggered precariously in with them.

"Pauline," came wafting gently from Rachel, "see what Homer is doing."

"Oh, just a-sitting, I guess," hazarded Pauline safely. But she went to

Georgette found her on the porch with the sedentary Homer, who gave her at once one of his wide, silent smiles. There was a mournful dog on the porch, too—an animal that kept its dejected nose in its listless paws by the hour together, showing no signs of life unless Rachel came out and passed him; then his loyal tail thumped twice.

"What's the name of the dizzy purp?" asked Georgette.

"Sport."

"I can't believe it. Tell me again." "Sport!"

"No use. I can't believe it yet," said Georgette severely. "I'll have to go and think it over."

A hammock under the apple trees had caught her eye, and seemed to beckon to her. And she pretty well kept to it for several days. The adults mercifully let her alone, and the little ones more mercifully, perhaps, kept running to her for snatches of talk.

Often she would drop to sleep, waking later to find Rachel by her with a cup of hot milk and some toast—for when it was seen that the family spread hardly appealed to her, she was permitted to doze her way back to strength in the hammock, the apple boughs brushing her, and was not expected to drag herself to the table.

Occasionally Sport came down, too, to find out what was going on, walking with slow and dejected stiffness, showing languid aversion to the whole interpolation; but when there, sinking with a heartbreaking sigh into the grass, and straightway going contentedly to apparent death.

"Burbank's last and best," is what Georgette called him, "a sportless Sport."

Nor was Homer unknown in the ap-

ple bower. "The Clean Cocoon" was his new name; clean, for reason obvious; cocoon, because of his silent habit of squirming pleasantly when poked. Pauline often wheeled the Clean Cocoon down in his chair cart, and he would sit by the hammock, reaching toward Georgette's down-swinging dress in a shiver of delight, sometimes clenching his dumpling fists and shaking them, sometimes curling his anguished toes and kicking when affairs went unsatisfactorily, but never, never crying.

"Mrs. Dornblazer," asked Georgette, one of the milk-and-toast times, "when do you take the muzzle off this baby? I never hear him. Doesn't he say 'Goo!' or 'Gar!' or 'Wack!' or 'What the devil!' or anything?"

"Miss Verlaine, please!" prayed Rachel, glancing at her little girls.

"I'll be everlastingly careful," promised Georgette. "Sure, Mrs.— Oh, I hate to say it; it's such a mouthful."

"Call me Rache. I wouldn't mind."
"I would. Sounds so like roach,"
mourned Georgette.

"My mother used to call me Ray," said Rachel, with the reminiscent wistfulness of one who sees a grave at the end of the thought.

"That's better. Ray, look at what I've taught the Cocoon. Pauline, bring him here."

The capable Pauline unstrapped Homer from his chair, and puffingly dumped him on Georgette's chest as she swung in the hammock.

Homer's head, as it noddled in a bar of sunshine, showed a tuft of white fuzz for hair.

"Now, then," warned Georgette, like a pedagogue. "Attention, Cocoon! Point to your raven locks!"

And the Clean Cocoon, concentrating all his baby powers, waggled his pointing forefinger up and up till it triumphantly signaled out the Albino tuft.

Shrieks of adoring laughter greeted this magnificent feat.

"He's not done yet," promised Georgette. "Now, then, baby! Show us how great Homer nods."

And ponderously, as if a millstone were weighing him down, Homer bent

his head to his ankles.

"Horry!" cried Rachel excitedly, waylaying him about to enter the house. "Do come here, and see what Homer does!"

As he none too eagerly approached, Horace's free stride changed to a palpably conscious one. Slightly touching his hat in greeting, he leaned aloofly against a tree trunk, as if emphasizing the fact that he was no party to his

own appearance.

Georgette was covertly, if viciously, pleased to see him, for she knew she made an acceptable sight. The unflattering mirror of Mrs. Noah's bureau had not been able to withhold the fact that youth and freshness were coming back to her face. And Georgette was a genius in a hammock, knowing, to a nicety, just how much of foot to show at one end, and how much of hair to display at the other. She quite rightly had no misgivings about her charming prettiness as she demurely put the Cocoon through his paces.

The "nodding of great Homer" struck Horace's rather undeveloped streak of the ridiculous, and he broke into a sudden laugh, a spontaneous, satisfactory sound, that caused Georgette to arch her eyebrows to herself.

"That's one in your favor," was her mental score. "You laugh like a gentle-

man."

Rachel laughed joyously, too; but to her the "Homer" had a meaning restricted solely to the present, and the "nod" was shorn of all allusion.

"Isn't he the darling baby!" she cried. Then, nervously: "I smell my bread. Horry, bring Homer with you."

And she sped to her oven.

When the visibly reluctant Horace stooped over the hammock to lift up Homer, Homer showed visible reluctance, too. He smiled his wide, soundless smile, shivered ecstatically at the contrariness of the move he was contemplating, then grabbed two handfuls of Georgette's floating hair, and buried his head in her neck.

Georgette, having a very good time,

made no attempt to disentangle the baby's hands, or to lift its coyly burrowing head, leaving these duties to Horace. She lay in lazy, cool contentment, laughing lights in her eyes.

"You love children?" he hazarded, plainly less curious about the matter than eager to shift attention from him-

self.

"Why, no; can't say that I do," admitted Georgette genially, as the burrowing head ducked delightedly under her chin.

"They follow you everywhere," he

persisted.

"Oh, yes—that's my fate! All my life I've been followed by things I didn't

love.

"I shouldn't call children 'things,' " he frowned, furious over his task of handling the satiny hair of the woman who was not nice.

"I should say not!" she cried virtu-

ously. "Who would?"

The hair part settled, the harder matter of unburrowing the head was at hand. Horace redly temporized.

"The children tell me that you have named us all newly; but they neglected to tell me my nickname. What have you invented for me?"

"Nothing," she said gently.

"No?" His tone was soft with friendliness, to repay her for the gentle note in her own.

"No"—still gently—"I don't have to. I couldn't invent anything funnier than 'Horry Dornblazer' if I sat up all

night."

At her gurgle of irrepressibly sweet laughter, Homer noddled upright in investigation. He was promptly snatched from contamination.

While on a stride to the house, Hor-

ace turned for a moment.

"Miss Verlaine, why does it interest you to be rude to me?"

"'Interest me!" she repudiated.
"You are mistaken. I never was less interested in my life."

And, to prove her words, she sleepily closed her eyes, as if quite unseeing of the hot conflict which glittered in his own.

CHAPTER IV.

"By now I ought to be strong enough to be able to go to the table, and look at the onions and clabber again," Georgette decided, critically approving of herself in Mrs. Noah's sample of mirror, exulting to see that the youthful roundness was coming back to her face.

She had spent the sultry May morning and forenoon in the hammock, making periodical forages in the grass for the long-stemmed violets which blossomed among it in wide purple patches, so that "hunt" was no word to use, no hunting being necessary; all one had to do was to fill one's hands till one was tired, then rest, and go at it again.

"I'll wear some of these," she said, gazing artistically at the bunches on the table, "and make myself up for sixteen, or seventeen, to match."

She therefore parted her wonderful hair on one side, plaited it into a thick, swinging rope, tied it with a black bow, put on a short-waisted white dress, and tucked a handful of violets loosely in her wide belt.

"Simple and girlish," she appraised, nodding pleasantly to what she could see of herself in the glass. "And prettier than you have ever been in your life, Georgette Verlaine. Probably comes of being able to say 'truly rural.' Gee, I wish John could see you! Lacking John, Horry will have to do. Question: Does Horry see you? Or doesn't he?"

Running downstairs, she ingratiated herself into the kitchen, where Rachel was cooking, and, noting that the overalled Horace was there also, she acted up to her sixteen-year-old character, and leaned, a little shyly, against the door while she said:

"Will you let me come to the table to-night, Ray?"

"You are a dear girl," said Rachel, honestly glad of her recovered beauty and strength, and praising her for it as for an achievement. "I really must kiss you, Miss Verlaine."

She methodically set back a frying pan before indulging in this emotional act; then wiped her beautiful hands on her apron. Her movements were always as accurate as if guided by perfect machinery, and she never showed flurry. Every suggestion of her full but supple body was comfortable, and she had a knack of looking cool in hot weather, and warm in cold weather.

When she kissed her guest's fragrant cheek, Horace strode from the room by one of its various doors.

"And I wonder why?" thought Georgette scientifically.

"Go out of the hot kitchen, and onto the porch, Miss Verlaine," advised Rachel, whose calm eyes were a trifle "broody" over the supper menu. "And don't let the children worry you."

Georgette sat on the edge of the porch, her head against one of its posts, her knees lightly locked in her hands. And she stared with uneasy fascination at the changes in the sky, whose glorious sunset streaks were turning to livid and sinister glares. The sight filled her with premonitions which thrilled her away from fear, rather than into it, and set loose all sorts of lawless daring in her thoughts. Nature was getting ready to go on a rampage, and Georgette was alert to follow. Without looking around, she heard Horace step across the porch, and then stand at gaze, evidently impressed by the sky.

"Rache," he called. "Oh, Rache!" His voice, though hushed, was alive with elation; in it a throbbing note of keen joy, which reached eagerly out to share, and be shared with. "Come here and look at this!"

"Doesn't care a damn whether I see it or not," confided Georgette softly to her post.

From the kitchen, Rachel's patient contralto floated out in a few words which gave him a fair chance to use his common sense, and reconsider.

"I have my hands in the biscuit dough, Horry."

"This won't soil your hands, Rache. It's a sunset. Please come and look at it."

With her hands rolled in her clean apron to protect them from nature, Rachel came out on the porch to take a wifely, rather than artistic, look at the sunset. She saw something else first, though.

"What have you got on your clothes for, Horry? Are you going anywhere?"

Georgette sneaked a glance around her post, to find out what was meant by "your clothes." She saw that Horace had discarded his overalls, and was in a decent sack suit, which was so unusual as to give him the air of being in full evening dress. She also saw that his face was severely unfavorable to the mention of "his clothes." He refused to hear it, and authoritatively

waved toward the sunset.

"Isn't that wonderful?" he asked. struggling around for words in which to pin down the wonder of it. A subdued but palpitating kinship with the elements seemed to be awake in him, as it was in Georgette. Unable to express this for himself, he seemed to plead with Rachel to interpret for him. "Do look at it!" Placidly obedient, her eyes followed his direction. "See that bank of black-it might be a beautiful sort of purgatory, mightn't it, Rache? With those hot flitters of lightning breaking through. And those coppery streaks-why, there's no words to describe the loveliness of them, or the meaning."

Rachel gazed conjugally. "It's lovely," she agreed, "and it means rain; and the attic windows will have to be shut. I'll go in now and do it."

Georgette rubbed her head sympa-

thetically against the post.

Horace's immovable silence informed Rachel magnetically that she had not risen as high as he wanted her to, so she said, a bit meekly: "Some one must shut the attic windows when a rain's coming, Horace."

And she went into the house.

Georgette stood up, still leaning against her post, and turned half around. The sullen, hot lights from the sky played over her white dress, and lent a burnished fire to her hair. The recklessness of the lightning flickered in her eyes. In her, the storm spirit was incarnate. Her glance claimed his, and held it.

"Thunder and lightning are on their

way," she said quietly, as if to a dear friend who understood. "Perhaps only noise and fire flash, and perhaps destruction and quick death-that's the unholy charm of it-you can't do anything but just wait and watch, and take what comes. A person feels so very small for a while that nothing matters, and after one realizes that nothing matters-why, then, one doesn't feel small at all; but big and fearless-a kind of brother to the crashing storm. That purgatory of yours over there in the sky, where the coppery streaks are, seems just writhing full of souls who somehow are happy with the mere excitement of suffering. And this-this pull that there is on the human heart before a storm breaks"-she pressed her two nervous hands against her breast-"that is the message from Thor and Loki, asking: 'Who is my brother? Who is brave and lawbreaking enough to ride the storm with the gods? Are you? Are you?" As she asked her quoted, fanciful question, Horace, who had stepped nearer and nearer to her during her low-voiced speech, drawn by a blood bond of rebellion against the inertia of the commonplace, his mobile face quickening with a thousand replies, was just saved from the banality of saying "Yes!" by the hint of the coming mockery with which she ended: "And what a ride it would be for some of us-always granted that we didn't have to go back, and put our attic windows down."

The comradeship and interest died from his face, and he looked her over

with his old disapproval.

"You do not understand Rachel yet," he said, making the huge mistake of considering her remark from its personal side. "Nobody appreciates her on a slight acquaintance. Her equilibrium, which really comes from a passionate sense of justice and love of order, looks something like coldness, especially to those who don't study deeply into character. Rachel doesn't exalt herself over sunsets when there are people to be taken care of. She would never stay awake half the night to admire a fine moon, but she would

stay awake all the night to look after you if you were sick. And, what is more, Rachel is not one of the people who yawn next day, where you would be sure to see it, in order to remind you."

Georgette smiled winningly.

"When a man defends his wife to me, I always feel that we are getting on," she said, in quite a grateful tone. Leaving him no time to digest this remark either well or ill, she continued: "It saves your muscles considerably to have such an equilibrist as Ray on the premises. In my house, it would be you, not I, who would do the galloping up two flights of stairs to shut the rain out."

"To take care of the home is a woman's privilege, as well as duty," he said, delivering the text firmly. "Moreover," he added, as if this were a logical sequence to the text, "in your house, I

should be absent."

"That's so," she replied, her eyes widely and trustfully open, as if she were looking to him for lovely and new

truths. "That's really so!"

He turned from her in rude impatience, and began fastening some shutters and awnings which rattled in ghostly obedience to flitting gusts of winds. The grass had changed from green to gray, and every now and then a dry leaf would leap up from it, as if puffed violently from below. The trees were motionless, except for some young cherries, which dashed restlessly from side to side.

The rain continued to hold off. Supper went through very creditably, and Georgette won honors by trying clabber and rhubarb. Rachel said no more about Horace's "clothes," but eyed them once in a while with unabated

perplexity.

"If he has put 'his clothes' on for me, he shall not go unrewarded," Georgette promised herself, as she bit thoughtfully into a biscuit. "He's handsome as a horse, head in the air, snorting around for trouble, and all ready to bolt if so much as a scrap of paper flies up."

After the supper dishes were cleared

away, Rachel, instead of being wilted, as were all the others, by the sultriness, indefatigably drew pails of water, and proceeded to bathe the three children in the kitchen.

"It will freshen the little things, and help them to sleep well," she said.

Georgette sat in a wooden chair, and interestedly watched the circus. Horace was within sight through an open door, sitting in his study, over his books.

Just as the ablutions were finished, the storm broke: a clap of thunder which shook the house split deafeningly, as if on the very rooftop; a blaze of lightning leaped into the room, lamplit though it was; and the rain poured from everywhere at once, a deluge of fury. The noise of the cataract, of the thunder, and wind, and thrashing trees, killed the talk for a while.

The children, awe-stricken and pale, clustered around their mother, and Horace moved restlessly from window to window, whose dark casements framed now the night, and now bril-

liant pictures of the orchard.

He came, once, to the door of the citchen.

"The 'rye is done for, Rache," he said quietly.

"Yes, that's done for, Horry."

He turned back to his reading table, but could not seem to read.

"Why is the rye done for?" asked Georgette of Rachel.

"There's hail with this rain, and the rye will be too beaten down to cut."

"You take it easily—the rye you've been counting on for income!"

"Taking it hard wouldn't mend it."
Their voices sounded puny in the

general uproar.

"Listen to it!" exulted Georgette, "It makes me want to smash things, I could shoot a bullet through the heart of the world. Hear that for a crash! The rain rattles like molten lead. It's Valkyrie music. I feel like Brünhilde, I am she!"

Throwing herself into the attitude of the goddess on her rock, Georgette sang the few lines that contain the twice-repeated, defiant war cry. The birdlike scream rang around the room

like the challenge that it was; and, as if in response to the invocation, came the musketry of the thunder, and the quiv-

ering tongues of flame.

"Y-o-u s-t-o-p!" shrieked Pauline, breaking into nervous tears. Rosine followed suit, and Homer threatened to

"Babies," said Rachel, "let's sing 'There's a Light in the Valley.'"

She began, and the two little girls eventually joined in.

"There's a light in the valley, there's a light in the valley, There's a light in the valley for me.

And no evil shall I fear while my Shepherd is so near,

There's a light in the valley for me."

"You bet the' is," said Pauline, peering bravely from the window, and accepting a searing flash calmly. had sung herself dry and composed.

Rosine chanced to look after the flash

had gone.

"Thissunt," she said shortly.

"This lightning will make it lovely for us to go upstairs to bed," said Rachel, gathering her nightgowned brood. "We'll be able to see without having to carry a lamp. Say good night to dadda and Miss Verlaine.

And, to the repeated strains of "There's a Light in the Valley," the quartet sang itself from sight.

Georgette sat a while eying the tub of water. Then she walked deliberately to the door of Horace's study, and inquired interestedly:

"Do you leave this tub for The Lady With the Equilibrium to cart away?"

"What do you mean?" He made no move.

apparently," "Nothing, admitted Georgette, strolling to the table. "What are you reading?"

"What do you want?" asked Horace, referring to her presence. He was plainly not rude, only genuinely puzzled.

"Want?" she echoed, looking around her with calm scrutiny. "Is this a room where some one must want something in order to be admitted?"

"Oh," said Horace shortly, seeing

that the visitation was a visit. "Will

you sit down?

" 'Willunt!" " observed Georgette briefly, wandering to the bookshelves, and running through the first names she saw. "Browning, Shakespeare, Shaw, The Agriculturalist, Kipling, Os-Wilde-gee-Poultry Raising, Schopenhauer, How to Keep Hogs, Rosetti, Kant, Huxley, Gibbon, Macaulay-the old chestnut-Dickens, Book of Synonyms, Wallenstein, Idylls of the King, Exterminating the Potato Bug, and Diseases of the Cow. Nice catholic soul you seem to be."

"That should not be a reproach," he

frowned.

"'Tissunt!" " quoted Georgette again, and the childishness of it seemed to aim a belittling blow at his powers of conversation,

"What do you read?" he ventured curtly.

"Horace."

He glanced at her sharply, but her face was immovable in its veracity and frankness.

"Miss Verlaine," he said slowly, "you are playing some game with me, and I am not clever enough to see what it is, in order to play back properly. That amuses you a little, and you take me as a joke."

'Nothing as intricate as a joke," she denied kindly. To herself she thought: "He's enjoying this. No man wearies of discussing himself. I'd like to bet a trifle I don't see the overalls again at supper table. He's rising to his 'clothes' nobly.'

"'Nothing as intricate as a joke," he repeated carefully. "Do you mean

anything by that?"

"No, thank God," said Georgette an-"If speech were restricted to grily. things we meant, we'd soon get down to signs. How can you sit there hunting for meanings, with all this grand storm going on outside? How can you do it?

"Because the storm is outside," he

explained methodically.

"Then we'll have it in," she announced gleefully.

She went quickly to one of the door-

like windows, and flung it wide open. The cool air hurled itself gratefully within the room, bringing all the freshness of the rain and the night. In its damp, wild rush, it blew out the lamp, and left the room in darkness—if darkness it could be called, where every second the brilliance of the lightning flashed. The sky seemed to be eternity's volcano, belching sudden flames. The orchard trees wrestled madly, and Crooning Water, near by, roared like a torrent.

"The only way to live is to mix in everything that's going on," cried Georgette joyously, as a sheet of fire played over her.

"Are you not afraid?" he asked curiously, standing at her side.

"No!" she scoffed. "Of what?"

The elements answered her, for a bolt struck that minute, and one of the trees writhed in fire, and fell apart. Tiny blue flames like live serpents flickered up and down the edge of the window, and the taste of sulphur was strong in the mouth. The terrible detonation shook the very flooring beneath Georgette's feet.

"Oh!" she cried, and threw herself quickly into Horace's arms, pulling them around her as a barrier.

In the breathless stillness that followed the stroke, they could hear Rachel in the nursery, singing, with calming insistence: "There's a Light in the Valley."

"You are afraid," contradicted Hor-

ace quietly.

He continued to hold her with a patient courtesy that proclaimed itself ready to endure for several weeks, if necessary.

"No!" she said, opening the arms as if they had been an iron gate, and step-

ping outside them.

She walked to the window, and pulled it shut, while he brought in the lamp from the kitchen. This he held for a moment in front of her face before placing it on the table.

"No, you are not," he agreed. Something puzzled him. "Then, why did you—why did you—" He was con-

strained to leave off, not knowing how to put it.

"Why did I seek the protection of your manly chest?" translated Georgette. She stopped to think. Then she walked over to the books, and looked carefully among them. "You haven't got him," she said, at length.

"Who?" he asked.

"Whom," she threw in pedantically, as good measure. "Stendahl. So I'll have to quote from memory. He says: 'It is a fine feeling to hold in one's arms the woman who has long been an enemy, and who is ready to remain an enemy.' Perhaps I wanted to make you a present of that fine feeling. Me—I'm a suspicion of a philanthropist, me."

She faithfully copied the Frenchness of Cora, and waved her fingers Gallically, her eyes snapping in blank, insin-

cere defense.

While he was getting ready to speak,

Rachel came up to them.

"That was a deafening clap," she said. "I think the storm is over now, though. That is generally the way. The worst ends it. So heavy a rain! I've been feeling sorry for all the frightened mother birds on their nests, whose eggs will be thrown out, or whose nestlings will drown. I've been worrying about them—haven't you, Miss Verlaine?"

"Why, I haven't had time," apologized Georgette, looking pleasantly at Horace. "Good night, everybody."

Upstairs in her room, Georgette rebraided her hair reflectively.

"He had his chance, and did not improve it. I'll learn to respect him pretty soon, and then there's no knowing what mayn't happen."

CHAPTER V.

May had gone, and June was new. "Nature is nothing but an old murderess. I hate her! One week the place is lovely with apple blossoms; then—whiff! comes a wind, and every last one is blown to death. Look at that grass!" Georgette shook her fist at it as she spoke. "Purple with darling vio-

lets for a day or so, till—biff! comes a rain, and soaks them to Hades. For a rare hour, the lilac hedge bursts out; turn your back on it, and it showers to the ground in brown ashes. Mother Nature! Humph! Me—I'd rather be her orphan than her child—nasty old Lucretia Borgia of a mother."

"What's the matter, Miss Verlaine?" placidly called Rachel, who was inside,

ironing.

"Why, I wanted to trim the parlor, Ray, and every devilish last violet is

gone!"

"Miss Verlaine"—and the placidity flew—"you promised me you wouldn't. Oh, if Rosine or Pauline were to hear

what---"

"Tenex tranquille, Ray. Both your babies are non est at the present; but, honest, they are more likely to injure my innocence than I theirs. Why, only a minute ago Pauline told me more about the inside furnishing and electric wiring of a hen than I ever hoped to know this side of heaven."

"You'll find beautiful wild azaleas across the Crooning Water, on the hill,"

sighed Rachel.

"Now, Ray, cheer up! You know well that I keep creditably corked before the infants."

"Yes, Miss Verlaine, you do; and I

thank you."

"Then the sigh, Ray, was for—"
"Yourself, maybe, Miss Verlaine,
You are so pretty, and so sweet, and
so good that the words you sometimes
use might mislead people into judging
you wrongly. It distresses me to have
you court that danger."

Georgette clasped her slender fingers together, and pressed them against her forehead, looking fixedly at the distant hills, and seeing beyond them, far

though they were.

"Ray," she said, at length, and its usual tang of lightness and laughter was gone from her voice, "remember this—I make no pretense about it—sweetness and goodness are the two last crimes on my calendar."

Rachel laughed, and punctuated the laugh with an amused thump of the iron on the board. Georgette wandered to the door, and looked lazily in at

"What do you iron the inside of the sleeve for?" she demanded, not being one to put a deal of work where it never would show.

Rachel held up the garment to call

attention to its tininess.

"The little arms are so soft, and scratch so easily," she said pityingly.

"Did anybody ever iron the insides

"Did anybody ever iron the insides of your sleeves?" probed Georgette. "Oh, never! And the seams used to

"Oh, never! And the seams used to hurt so! That's how I know."

"Don't you ever ache to be taken care of—just a little?"

"Why, I——" Rachel looked troubled. The wedding ring on her hand glittered bravely. Rachel walked over to the stove, and carefully tried all the irons. "Whenever I ache to be taken care of," she remarked, coming back with the hottest, "I know that I must have been neglecting some one myself; so I do something for that person right away."

She hunted among the clothes for a white neck scarf of Horace's, and ironed it with extraordinary pains.

"This is no place for muh," said Georgette virtuously, turning to the approaching children. "Pauline, will you show me where the shy azalea burgeons? How's that for language, Ray?"

"Huh?" blinked Pauline, seeming to shove away the unknown words with her eyelashes. The meaning she had grasped. "Yes, I will. But I have to mind Homer while marma irons, so if I take him with us, you will wheel him over the wabbliest part of the bridge?"

Homer was in his chair cart as usual. "Call it a bargain," promised Geor-

cette

"One child's about all I can manage," reflected Pauline, looking from Homer. "Rosine, you'd better stay here on the porch, you had."

"Haddunt," scoffed Rosine, with withering emphasis, plunging off the porch on the word, and waddling bridgeward.

"Had we better take her?" inquired Pauline of the azalea seeker.

"It has every appearance of it."

The four of them set out.

"And, goshdarn it," said Pauline, very gently, as she chanced to look behind her, "if here don't come Bur-

bank's last and best."

The sportless Sport trailed after them, a disconsolate fifth, the bones of his hind legs sticking up very high as he walked, quite as if the goad of necessity was jabbing him continually from the rear, forcing him to follow

against his every wish.

"A ghastly end to a good beginning." Georgette hurled this arraignment at Sport, who slunk under it six inches nearer to earth. She looked ahead at the toddling Rosine, next at Homer, who was so pleased to be journeying that he made a V of himself by the ecstatic raising of his feet; next at the brief-skirted, efficient Pauline; finally at the dog with the suffering lope. "If Broadway could but see me now, I'd need no further advertising for the season."

They went across the brook and up the hill to where the wild azaleas were —masses of pale pink, delicate, and tender as the dawn, in crowded hedges

of loveliness.

"Oh, oh!" was all Georgette could say, as she filled her arms to overflow-

ing.

She trimmed Homer's cart till it was lost in beauty, and he seemed to be smiling from a bower; she crowned Pauline and Rosine; she stuck clusters in her own hair and in her belt; she outraged Sport to the last degree by decorating his collar; and finally the cavalcade, pinker than the June itself, wandered, singing, back toward home.

In a field by the sloping road, a man toiled at the plow; at his back a brown sea of fresh furrows testified to his steady, dogged labor, which had lasted from the morning. As the pink troupe neared him, he guided his horse to the fence, and stood awaiting them.

"You?" said Georgette nonchalantly. She stopped by the roadside, leaned her head against the azaleas she carried, making a sunshade of them, and frowned unfavorably at the plowed field. "What a freakish amusement!"

"It is scarcely an amusement," said Horace. His face was pale with the strain of it, and his breath came in long quivers, quite as did the breath of the fine horse which stood beside him, and took the rest thankfully.

"I am sorry for that beast," acknowledged Georgette, her eyes admiringly upon it. "He has to keep at it, whether

or no."

"And I?" suggested Horace. "You know that I am gone from sunup to sundown—what did you think I did?"

Georgette looked very prettily ashamed as she admitted: "It's fierce! But I've never thought of you at all. But I'll start—and on the things you don't do—which will keep me long from having to ponder on the things you do."

He took her in thoroughly with his

eyes.

"There is an insinuation again. Its subtleness goes over my head. What have I left undone? True, I have not admired you before. But I do to-day. You look very beautiful. Your eyes are the most softly wonderful eyes I have ever seen in a woman. Your voice reaches out and touches like a caress—when you want it to—and you sometimes want. You stand there like a picture, the azaleas against your hair and your cheek—and you know you are like a picture. And as long as you remain there in the road, I shall remain here by the fence, and look at the prettiness of you. I cannot help it."

Georgette movelessly smiled. "That will do very well—for a be-

ginning."

The faint astonishment in her voice made him realize the completeness of what he had said, so he began to lop off a little here and there, by continuing:

"Any woman with a song on her lips, flowers in her hands, and children at her knees, is a picture for every man to admire. Domesticity is a jeweled crown."

"Domesticity is a rotten fake!" said Georgette musically. "It is not I, but Rachel, who is playing the domestic drama at the moment; and she is red and puffy, with tired feet, standing in a hot kitchen, burning her hands and cheeks ironing your ties, for you to criticize as 'wrinkled.' Just as there is nothing dirtier than house cleaning, so is there nothing more dangerously unsexing than womanliness. I'm idling. As a natural consequence, the compliments are coming my way. I'd sooner serve ten years in the House of Correction than one on the home hearth. Come, kiddies!"

The children, who had been dully waiting for her to get done with Horace, whom they noticed not at all, now whooped joyously, and singingly pulled

her down the hill.

She had been gone from sight several minutes before the man with the plow shook off his thoughts, and took to the next furrow.

CHAPTER VI.

Because the azaleas had gone the way of the violets, and because the wild laurel, that beautiful laggard of the mountains, had at last gone, too, leaving the rhododendron in flaunting pink possession of the wood edges, a person could tell that June was over, and that July held hot triumph in the country-side.

On a certain Sunday morning, Georgette was swinging idly in the ham-

mock.

Georgette had made Rachel shell her peas down by the hammock,

They had been speaking of Doctor Congdon.

"And where did you meet him?" in-

quired Georgette.

"After Rosine was born, I had to go to a New York hospital," said Rachel, shelling quietly past a crisis which would have furnished a city woman with clinical conversation for years and years, "and Doctor Congdon was on the staff."

"Goodness, Ray, what a yea, yea-er, and a nay, nay-er you are!" said Georgette impatiently. "It's like pulling teeth to get romantic detail out of you. And now Horace—what made you fall

in love with him?"

Rachel quite blushed and fidgeted, shelling peas in terrific haste.

"The Dornblazers and the Beseckers -I was a Besecker-were always good friends. And I used to be as much at home in his house as in my own. But Horry was always away, trying to work through college. Then Dan, his eldest brother, died; and the old man, whose heart was set on there being always a Dornblazer farm, called Horry back to run it. And Horry gave up college, at a big sacrifice to his own wishes, and came home. He's been paying off Dan's debts ever since his father died-his father worried over them. Horace knew so much, I asked him to teach me. And he gave me some lessons, and then—and then—I fell in love with him."

"You're so tame you put me to sleep. Go 'way." And she settled herself doz-

ily into the hammock.

"I'm finished, anyway," smiled Rachel, going back to the house with her pan of green spheres. "And I'll cook a sprig of mint with them," she reflected, aloud.

In the ensuing peace, Georgette indeed slept, waking long afterward at feeling the rough caress of a man's hand upon her hair. When she opened her eyes, the man himself was standing with folded arms, frowning at her.

"You lovely John Congdon!" smiled Georgette drowsily; but not moving from her effective supineness, "Did you

drop from heaven?"

"You sleep well?" he demanded pro-

fessionally.

"Twenty hours out of the twenty-four," she answered. "But don't talk of me. Talk of you! Talk of little old New York. How's the bunch?"

"You eat well?" he pursued dogmati-

cally.

"Like a horse! John, for the Lord's sake, have done, and cough up some news of the gang."

"Faint any more?"

"No!" glowered Georgette, getting sulky. "What are you doing here, anyhow? I thought none of you men were to come down. Aren't you breaking rules?"

He took her wrist, and counted her

pulse methodically.

"Right-o?" she asked impudently, rubbing the mark of his fingers from the place when she got her hand back. "Get up, please."

"Won't move!" fumed Georgette.

Sighing over the necessity, he gripped the hammock taut, and then slid her as from a board to her indignant feet.

"Now, shut your eyes, and extend

your arms."

"Tests, tests, tests!" snapped Georgette, who had been through it before. She did as she was told.

"Bring your forefingers together."

She did so, and then opened her eyes triumphantly as her finger tips touched accurately.

"Shut your eyes again!" he ordered. "Now, walk forward, straight, to the

tree that was in front of you."

"'In front' is citified and correct," ruminated she, walking straight as an arrow from the bow, "but to speak of a tree or a barn that is 'in back' of a place, as they do around her, is rural and wrong. I wonder why. Now, you big idiot, I've bumped my nose against

the tree! Are you satisfied?"
She opened her eyes angrily.

"Satisfied," he answered, looking it. A few months ago, and she could not walk blindfolded without falling.

"Then, pour out some news about the pals," she coaxed, curling into the ham-

mock again.

"Those who are not abroad, or in retreat, are yapping on the curbs, as usual," he said shortly, taking Rachel's vacated chair.

"You've got a new suit," she said fondly, admiring it, and reaching lazily for his sleeve, the cuff of which she rubbed in ecstasy. "What a ducky little lot of buttons!"

"That'll do," he advised, retrieving

his arm. "Don't be fulsome."
"Haven't you any news?"

"Yes Smith is back," he said, watching her narrowly.

"Yes Smith!" she marveled. "Brought all his money back, too?"

"So it seems!"

"Wonder whether he shook England,

or if England fired him. Not that it matters. The grand fact is that Yes and his millions are ours again. Yes Smith is the only man whose strength I was ever afraid of."

"Why?" contemptuously.

"Because he is the only man I know who is not afraid of my weakness." She seemed to be dwelling with undue pleasure upon some memories.

"I suppose you know the man is thoroughly bad?" hazarded Congdon.

"Rotten!" intensified Georgette.
"Otherwise he wouldn't be Yes Smith.
I think I'll wander back to New York town."

"You'll stay right here through Au-

gust."

"O.K.—doctor's orders," she acquiesced readily.

Congdon leaned forward, and frowned thoughtfully into her charming face.

"You look so childish and sweet, I believe you've been up to mischief."

"Is that what you came to look into?" she asked astutely.

He sat back, plainly worried. He did not see, until she was nearly upon him, Rachel, who came hastening from the house, Homer in her round, white arms, and Rosine and Pauline at her skirts.

"Rache!" he cried happily, standing at gaze before her, drinking in the good sight of her big beauty. Her greenchecked gingham dress, and the graceful poise of her brown head suggested his complimentary next: "You straight, tall, beautiful, fruitful cornstalk of a woman, you!"

Rachel went off into her rare laugh frank and friendly sound.

"Ray," counseled Georgette, "call him a yellow turnip of a man, and get even."

"Bairnies, bairnies," cooed Congdon to the children, who grinned with wide, pleased silence at him. "Rache, thank you for curing this girl in the hammock."

Rachel tucked in Georgette's feet with a gentleness that bespoke sincere affection. "Thank you, rather, for sending us such a bright sunbeam of a girl," she said. Almost unconsciously, she

kissed Georgette.

At this, a big load seemed to slip suddenly from the doctor's back, and he cleared the frown from his face.

"Where's Horace?" he quite sang. "Gone to Canadensis, to read to a friend who is ill," said Rachel. won't see him till this evening.

"That's not at all," said Congdon, ruefully looking at his watch. "I have but a few minutes more to stay.

"Doctor Congdon," pleaded Rachel gravely, "please don't think of trying to catch the train back. And I believe you walked from the station! Take dinner with us. Except for peas, I'm not cooking anything. We're just piecing today, but if you'll only stay I'll fry you some of the elder-blossom pancakes you like."

"Thank you, Rachel; but I am going back. I am busy in the city to-night."

"A seven-hour journey and a sevenmile walk just to see little me!" cackled Georgette, snuggling delightedly in the hammock.

"Not exactly," he dissented, the troubled frown coming back. "I-I needed

my sweater."

"A seven-hour journey and a sevenmile walk just to keep an eye on little me!" amended Georgette flexibly.

And, though he still frowned at her, the dissent was wanting in his gaze. "Good-by," he said softly, as if the

word hurt him.

"'Good-a-by, John, I gotta to go,'" she quoted carelessly. She stretched out her slim hand for his; but, on second thoughts, drew it back again. "We won't be fulsome," she babbled obediently.

"Oh, if I could only drive you over!"

mourned Rachel.

"A seven-mile sprint," murmured Georgette, with praise. "Very fair for middle age."

"Middle age!" The word whipped him. "I guess I'm still young enough,"

was his caustic speech.

"Young enough for what?" asked Georgette, in great curiosity, shoving her elbow under her mass of hair, and looking hard at him.

He studied her so intently that it was evident she had turned from a

woman into a specimen.

"You may not have any soul, of course," he pronounced scientifically, "but if you have, and it ever wakes, you'll feel sorry for some of these things you say."

With that, he was gone. "I'll mail your sweater," Georgette had called

gently after him.

The hot, quiet Sunday passed as hot, quiet Sundays do. Horace came back in time for supper, and then harnessed the horses to the surrey, for churchgoing.

It was decidedly a family affair, encompassing not only the three adults and the three children, but also Sport, who clambered with fearful sighs into the vehicle, and flung himself bonily at the bottom, where he was much in the way of the feet.

"Nor is Sport the only Christian dog we have," commented Georgette interestedly, when they arrived at the meeting house, seeing that fox terriers, and hounds, and collies were greatly and restlessly in evidence around the front

door and up the aisles. The whole meeting was a terrible bore to Georgette, but it was finally over. In coming out of church, she got separated from her hosts, and when she at last emerged into the open air, she found the entire Dornblazer family packed into their surrey; also an alien

woman with two babies. "Oh, Miss Verlaine, take my place," cried Rachel, leaning forward in a troubled way from her seat. "Mrs. Geiger's buggy broke, and I thought we could drive her and the children home, and get back for you. Take my place."

"Indeed, I won't!" disclaimed Geor-

gette accommodatingly.

"Miss Verlaine." Horace's voice was so seldom addressed to her personally that the sound of it thrilled her

"Yes, Mr. Dornblazer?"

"Wait for me here. I shall drive back for you." At his touch on the rein, the horses

leaped down the road, leaving her no choice but to be passively acquiescent and obedient.

CHAPTER VII.

Georgette went a few steps up the road to a shambly little bridge, and leaned against the railing and dreamed down into the fussing and frothing creek

Suddenly she began to wonder where Horace was.

Strain her ears as she might, she caught no sound to indicate the return of the surrey. The silence was so intense that it wooed some hidden frogs into a discussion of the sermon.

"Ack!" derisively said one, quite at Georgette's nervous feet.

"Wack?" asked another bad-temperedly.

There was a long pause, as if the first one was deliberating whether or not to repeat his remark.

"Wack?" persisted the bad-tempered one furiously.

"Ack," grudgingly gave in the first.
"Me to the sacred edifice," murmured Georgette, gathering her skirts around her feet. "A frog that can be seen is bad enough, but an unseen frog passes human endurance." She flew back to the church, and stood rooted to its steps, not daring to move to the right or left. The white tombstones seemed to stare at her inquisitively, and a few cheap flags which had been stuck into the graves as long ago as Decoration Day signaled to her with ghostly flappings.

"Cheerful place for a tryst," she said distressfully. "When that fool finally does come I'll be so glad to see him I'll fall all over him. And, oh, goodness, here's a man walking up the road —what will he think of me?"

The apprehension with which she studied the oncomer changed gradually to recognition—it was only Horace, who walked with that graceful, yet conscious, lounge; who trod soundlessly as an Indian, yet held his head high, with a staglike independence and defiance—"hunting for trouble"—as Georgette translated it.

Anger cured her feet of the fear of frogs, and she ran into the road to confront him.

"Where are the horses?" she demanded.

He raised his hat pleasantly. His lean, determined face, with its frank, bright eyes, and reserved mouth, became more and more visible to her in the starlight, and, quite against her petulant will, ingratiated itself into her warm liking. "The bird of an Orlando he'd make," was her startled thought.

"The horses?" he answered. This senseless repetition of words was an unusual trick with him, and was, perhaps, due to the fact that he was looking at her with a quick admiration which disconcerted his general orderliness of mind. "Why, at Crooning Water; Black Bess went lame, and I had to unhitch her."

"What was the matter with the buckboard?" she asked dryly.

"Bonnie Boy dislikes it. He would kick it into matchwood."

"Would he kick the buggy to matchwood, too?" demanded she witheringly. She had often enough seen Bonnie Boy hitched safely to the buggy, and was, therefore, sure of her ground.

He laughed the spontaneous, musical laugh which never failed to strike with approval upon her critical ear.

"Miss Verlaine, the honest truth is that I have never had a walk with you, and have often wanted it. To-night's opportunity was more than I tried to resist."

"I'm glad you didn't. That's all right," she said, mollified by his aboveboard speech into a spirit of boyish comradeship. "Why didn't you say so before? Come on!"

"Have you ever noticed," he said, easily fitting his stride to hers, and taking the road with her, "that what makes the night dark is an artificial light of some sort? If we had a lantern, now, we could see only a step ahead; as it is, we can see for half a mile or more."

"Rub that parable into your minister," she advised. "He needs it badly. Every time he throws light on a bit of Scripture, he blots it out forever."

"I can't stand him, either," said Horace simply.

"Then, why do you go to church?"

she demanded.

"It sets a good example in the community.

"Tommyrot!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Tommyrot! For a brave man, you are the tamest thing I know.'

"As—for instance?"

"You are paying off your brother's debts, aren't you?

"Yes."

"Take my advice: Brace up, and leave

"And why, Miss Verlaine?"

He asked the question without rancor. It seemed as though he expected, and wanted, just the answer which she gave:

"Because there is no nobility about it. It is rank foolery—amounting to absolute dishonesty to Ray and the chil-

dren.'

"That is rather a hard speech, Miss Verlaine, for a womanly woman.

"A womanly woman isn't making it," she said crisply. "But don't let's switch culprits. To go back to you: Why did you give up college and take to farming?

"You evidently know."

"You were a muff there, too. To sacrifice self is no way to benefit another."

"Why are you saying these things?"

"To make conversation."

"The moon is coming up," he said

imperturbably.

They paused and watched the great globe poise a moment on the horizon, and then seem to lurch up behind the trees in invisible bounds.

"If a sceneshifter rose it that way, we'd fire him," murmured Georgette, fascinatedly watching. "Looks like a lovely cheese pie, doesn't it, with a bite out of it?"

"You have not much sentiment, have you, Miss Verlaine?" he questioned critically, lunging forward again.

"None to waste," she corrected. "Which leaves me with a reserve fund larger than most people's.

"I like to hear you talk," he said, half

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puzzled to account for that liking.
"So do I," she commented. "And there are two subjects on which I talk really well."

"One of them is?"

"The thing I know nothing about."

"Oh! And the other?"

"The thing that is none of my business."

"Go on," he permitted amiably.

She cheerfully accepted.

"All right, I will. Instead of poring and sighing over book catalogues every night, let your brother's creditors whistle a while for their money, and buy yourself some new books.'

"You are an iconoclast," he said, shoving his hat gratefully back from his forehead. "But, by Jove, you are

encouraging.'

"Better let me make out your lists," she suggested. "You've got enough volumes of 'How to Squash the Cabbage Worm,' as it is."

"Why, if you only would!"

He seized on the idea eagerly, and, debating this book and that, they quarreled comfortably and long.

"And now I'm tired of books," she said, shaking the whole vast subject "Interlude-the shadow from her. dance."

Extending an imaginary scarf, and tilting her head so as to keep her eyes upon her own black silhouette upon the milk-white road, she whirled through several intricate and beautiful mazes of

steps, the music to which she whistled softly.

"Get out of the way!" she broke off to order, as he hurried and stepped in front of her.

He stood his ground, instead.

"Miss Verlaine, that's the prettiest thing I've ever seen," he admitted unreservedly. "But you'll scandalize the very scenery hereabouts, doing it on a Sunday night. The fences, even, have

"Then I'll talk to them," she said, with unregenerate swiftness. A stiff movement of the arms and head, and she typified the minister to the life. "Brother posts and sister slats," she intoned sonorously, "if you fail to drag your crosses after you, verily are ye all N. G. And as for thou, oh, mother ragbag, at the organette, pipe for us a

dismal melody-yea, pipe."

A droop of the neck and kink at the belt line, and she changed subtly to the limp woman at the organ, wheezing out a jerky gospel hymn. One after another, she imitated the various members of the choir. Then, whipping out a make-believe plate, she passed it faithfully to each shrub and twig which branched into the roadway.

"You are dangerous," said Horace smoothly, but positively. "I've got to get you off the road." He stopped at an opening in the rhododendron hedge. "Miss Verlaine, here is a short cut through the woods to Crooning Water.

Will you take it?"

"A joy shall it be to us this fair night to know we have gathered together in amity and peace," jibbered Georgette, waving him into the opening, and ducking in after him, "but methinks 'tis a sorry compliment to plan a walk with me, and then gladly take to short cuts."

He was still laughing hopelessly at her impudent imitations, and was pushing confidently ahead upon the dark trail, every inch of which he knew by sense of tread alone, independent of

sight.

"It may be a short cut, but it is very beautiful after a while," he promised. "We'll be out of the woods soon. Then the trail runs beside the creek, which will look like fairyland with this moon

on it."

As the dark breathlessness of the woods closed around her, Georgette lost her impertinent high spirits, and fell into silence. The sweetfern brushed them on the right and left, giving up faint perfume of musk and clover, and now and again, from underfoot, would steal up the spicy sigh of bruised pennyroval—a homely, haunting fragrance.

royal—a homely, haunting fragrance.
"And smell the wild raspberries."
said Horace, speaking out of the silence in perfect continuation of her own
thought. "They are more real than if
we could see them. I love night. I
can always think more clearly, and can

sense things more sharply then than when the world is swimming in sunlight. I love the night. And you,

Miss Verlaine?"

"I like to see where I'm stepping," said Georgette, thinking of frogs again, her nerves fainting. The sweetfern which touched her hands felt as cold and frightening as the noses of wild animals, and the close trees brushed her forehead like bats. Several times she had to fight down a scream.

She stood still. Her veins ran ice. "Mr. Dornblazer!" Her voice was

shaking.

He stopped at once, and she felt him turn to her.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"I am frightened."

"I can hear you are. But of what?"

"Of snakes!"

He pondered this reply a moment, gaining a complete realization of her fear. Then he attempted reassurance.

"They are not often out at night."
"Once would be enough." Her voice

broke like a child's.

"Oh, Miss Verlaine, don't!" he begged through the darkness. "Keep up your courage for a little longer, and we will be out by the creek, and in the light. Shall I go on? Can you follow?"

"I can try," trembled Georgette.

He started forward again, talking encouragement to her, and she forced herself a few steps farther. Then a twig moved under her foot, making a rustle in the brushwood—and a second time the remembered glitter of the evil eyes of the lurking snake chained her to the path. Movement became a literal impossibility.

"It is no use," she said dully, speaking with difficulty. "I am indeed fright-

ened."

"And I hardly know how to help you," he said at length, having been thinking the thing out. "Of course, I could offer to carry you; but it would have a farcical sound. Moreover, it would be hard to do on this narrow trail; I could not protect you half so well from the brambles and branches as by walking ahead of you. If a snake

were on the path, don't you see I'd step on it first, and give you warning?"
"Oh, then you think, too, that there

might be one," she cried, as if a last

desperate hope had died.

"No," he said patiently, "I do not."
In the pause that followed, the night's soft voices sang to them tellingly. On the other side of the short woods, the creek trickled and rippled its restless, luring message—a message which finds responsive echo in the uneasy wanderlust lurking in every human heart.

"You are good not to be angry," faltered Georgette presently. "For I know just how foolish this is. Yet, knowing—somehow—doesn't make it any better. I am not often afraid. I am afraid now, though. Really and

truly-really and truly!"

The dreary childishness of the repetition was pathetically sincere, and a floating rush of odor from the sweetfern showed that Horace had moved obe-

dient to it.

"Here," he said authoritatively, "take my hand, and follow; for we must go. It is as near to the creek as it would be to get back to the road. Here!" She felt his hand tendered to her, and she gladly caught it in her own. He drew her gently forward. "Now come on, dear," he urged.

The word of affection, dropped by sheerest accident, suddenly flamed up between them like a torch. And each saw into the blazing heart of the other.

He put his arm around her, and held

her to him.

"You are my girl—my girl," he said, with steady conviction, "and have been, from the first moment that I saw you. I knew it then, and have known it every instant since. But I never intended to speak. The thing spoke itself, as such things will—if they are true enough. And I am glad—glad! Come to me! You are my gir!"

"No!" panted Georgette, trying to pull herself free. "Let me go! I am

not!"

"That is a lie," he said evenly, triumphantly. "For if you were not, being in my arms would matter but little to you, and you would not struggle to get away. You are mine! And I will prove it to you."

With that, he kissed her; and at the kiss she put her arm around his neck,

rving:

"You will hate me for this, and I will hate myself. But I can't help it! Do not dare to laugh! I can't help it, I tell you. Everything is my fault. I planned it-for you, I mean-not for me. I thought I could keep hard and free-as I always do. No man has ever made me feel—this. Men fall in love with me so easily it has never interested me-only amused me. I have grown into the habit of playing them like cards, caring only faintly, just about the time, or the trouble, it would take, or would not take, to make certain points and win the game. Indeed, I have always had a contempt for men because they were such easy playthings, to be taken up and thrown aside when I wanted."

"You shall not throw me aside." "And I thought it was the same contempt I had for you, too. I have always been conscious of you. Lying in the hammock day after day, ill and wretched half the time, I have watched your health and strength, and have almost hated you for them-or so I thought. Wherever you have been, I have had a call to follow. And I was furious with myself. For I despise the country and despise country people. I do, I do! But wherever you were, life seemed to brighten; you were so strong, so silent, so self-reliant, I said to myself: 'I shall make him weak, make him speak, make him turn to me; and then I shall laugh, and go.' Well, I have done some of it; I have made you weak, I have made you speak, I have made you turn to me. But I—I am holding you fast, and I am crying."

"You are holding me fast because you need me—as I you. But why do

you cry?"

"Because this is wrong, and must not

last."

"It is right! When I find my own, shall I not claim it? When it comes to me, am I to turn it away? Now that I have felt the dear warmth of you within my life, am I to go barren and cold

for ever after? This moment has belonged to me through the years. The first time I saw you-before you had seen me-when you were standing alone on the station platform-I said: 'There is the woman I should have married. Having married her, I would not now be toiling in the valley. She would have shown me where the top of the world was, and I should have been strong enough to hew out a track to it, wide enough for both of us.' I saw that you were ill and faint, and I gloried in the proud curtness that kept you erect and masterful. I laughed to myself at the way you were ordering the men around, and said: 'That is as it should be-all men but me."

"And when you were on the cart seat with me, the thought wrung my heart: 'Girl, if you had come to me a few years ago, we would not be riding down this day, but up.' You filled my life from the first. I could not tear you and the hours apart. When you asked me for the reins, again I said to myself: 'All men but me. What is given to her she forgets; she shall remember me, if only for what she does not get from me.'

"There were days, though, when I could have killed you; days when you showed your contempt for the things that were mine, for me—my work, my leisure, my speech, the very coat upon my back! Do you think I have not known? Many times I could not understand you. You puzzled me with your pretended hardness. That was because I could not understand myself. But when I understood myself?"

He was exultingly silent. "Well?" she urged passionately.

"I knew we loved each other. Come out to where the moonlight is. You are not afraid now?"

"No. Never again, I think."

"The softness of your voice, the softness of your ways—when you are kind!"

In a few moments the trail widened, and took them gradually into the open flat through which the stream raced down from the mountains, cold and clear as a spring, the moon pouring its silver over it. Hand in hand, they walked to its side.

Once he stopped her.

"Listen to it well," he ordered. "What it says to-night it will say forever—a message that you alone can hear: 'He loves me!' Tell me, you, what it is to say to me."

"It must say, 'Good-by,' " cried Geor-

"You think with me it's kiss and sail away?" he asked, looking at her curi-

"There is nothing else to do. We have had our moment's madness, but it must pass, and to-morrow we must meet as we have always met—nothing to each

other."

"What sort of a woman are you? Let me look!" he said, turning her face to the moonlight. "To-night eternity has let us come into our own, and you say: 'It must pass.' That is because you have never loved—before. But you love now; and you will learn slowly, slowly, what it means. Your true home is here against my heart, and, try to leave me though you may, you will know no peace by day or night till you come back to that home."

"My home?" asked Georgette fiercely. She dragged aside a swinging branch, and made disclosure of the dark outlines of the house at Crooning Water, from two windows of which there glowed a light, like guiding, guarding eyes. She let the screening bough fall again, and clung to him. "It is 'goodby.' Say it to me, and let me go. Goodby, good-by!"

"To give me a moment so sweet that it is dearer to me than honor, a moment whose sweetness I must, and will, and shall, feel again, is a poor way of saying good-by to me, Georgette, and you will find it so. There is no longer any good-by now for either of us—but death."

"Except life," she said, taking up her cynical hardness, and flinging herself away from him.

When she got to the house, its hot darkness crushed her like prison walls. Fighting the murky oppressiveness and threat of it, she ran up the flight of stairs, to find Rachel standing at her own bedroom door, waiting for her, real concern and tenderness on her beautiful face.

At the sudden sight of her, and at the light which shone from the room lamp, Georgette shrank wildly back.

"There, I knew the walk would be too much for you, and I told Horace so," mourned Rachel contritely. "I should have helped him put the buggy together. He said it was taken apart. And Jake Dusenberry has the cart. So I gave in. But you are not as strong as you try to make out. Do go right to sleep—I've lit your lamp for you—and rest. Good night, dear Miss Verlaine."

As Rachel bent to kiss her, Georgette flung her hands over her face where the other kisses burned and stung.

"Oh, Ray, Ray, don't!" she gasped.
"How strange you look," said Rachel, startled. "Tell me what has happened."

From the hall below, Horace spoke up quickly, and, with a heavy emphasis which held—for one listener, at least—the bitterest of self-blame:

"I made her take the wood trail with me, and she encountered upon it—a

snake."

"A snake!" cried Georgette hysteri-

cally. "Two!"

At this Rachel broke into quiet laughter.

"Snakes aren't as plentiful as all that, Miss Verlaine. Poor, shaking child, you; go to sleep. Good night."

"Good night, Ray."

Georgette ran to her room, and shut

the door upon herself.

Rachel stared after her in a worried, affectionate way. She waited for a while upon the landing, expecting to see Horace. Finally she called over the banisters:

"It is all shut up down there, Horace.

Are you coming?

His answer was a shock to her, and was given from the distance of the front door, where he was evidently standing.

"Ray, I won't be back to-night. I am going to saddle Bonnie Boy, and ride over to—to—Canadensis again, to see how Jan Besecker is."

"Why, you said he was better!"

"So he was."

"You did not say you had to go back."
"I have just thought of it. Good night, Rache." The door boomed sullenly to.

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Rachel stood petrified with astonish-

ment.

"Why, he won't get over there till midnight," she told her own shadow on the wall.

"Marma," came sleepily from the

room where Pauline lay.

"Everything is all right, Pauline," said Rachel steadily. "Go to sleep, my dearest."

"But I want a drink, marma."

So Rachel wrapped a cloak around her, and crept out to the porch pump. From it she could see Horace's lantern light moving in streaks past the openings in the barn.

"Not till midnight," she murmured again. "What can have started him?"

Glancing up to the window of her guest's room, she noted that the light was already extinguished, and that a dark outline lay prone upon the window sill—as if some one's head might be prostrate there.

"She'll catch her death of cold—and how clear the brook sounds, as if it

spoke!"

Going upstairs with the glass of water, she knelt by Pauline's bed while the child drank. A swift shudder shook her.

Pauline sleepily took note of this. "Mrs. Dusenberry says," she elucidated, "'at when a person shivers, and s

shivers, and shivers—all for nothing—'at some other person is walking over 'at one person's grave. Is some walker walking over *yours?*"

"Maybe," whispered Rachel. She raised her head, and followed the clatter of Bonnie Boy's hoofs upon the lane—out, out to the highroad. "Maybe, Pauline."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Judicious sinning, in discreetly small doses, is the best bloom of youth there is," Georgette told herself the next morning, nodding to her pleasantly unvexed reflection in the mirror. "But I've got to stop. Bad as I am, I am not quite low enough to smash up the establishment of dear Mrs. Hayseed downstairs—so the sooner I let all parties know it, the better."

She ran down the flight of steps with an inspiring clatter, and dashed cheerfully into the kitchen, where Rachel, with a dragging gait most unusual to her, was preparing breakfast—Pauline

helping, according to custom.

"Ray, you angel!" cried Georgette, shaking her in lieu of a greeting, and, by that very laxity, bringing back the life of reassurance to Rachel's white face. "I was nine kinds of a fool last night, but Richard is himself again this morning. And isn't that your Tam O'Shanter of a husband riding back?" By "that" she meant the soft thud of Bonnie Boy's hoofs upon the grass, just heard outside.

"I hope so," said Rachel, brightening, and throwing wide the door.

"As for you," warned Georgette, pouncing upon the delightedly screaming Pauline, and bearing her to the ground, kneeling beside her to keep her there. "Roll, goldarn yer, roll!"

And the flattered Pauline spun dizzily under her hand, and screamed musically every minute, to the gnawing envy of Rosine, who rushed near to watch.

Into the hurly-burly Horace stepped, his one brief "Good morning" doing niggardly duty for everybody in the room.

"After all, Rache," he said, weariness in every movement, "there was an uncanny need of me up at Jan's, and I'm glad I went. He had a sudden turn to the bad, and we all had to fight to keep him. But we think he is well on the road to recovery by now."

"You poor, worn-out boy!" said Rachel, her face glowing with pride in him, her every doubt at rest. "Sit down, and let me bring you some food."

He stood irresolute, and then cast a glance at the group upon the floor. Georgette nodded to him most casually.

"I've been telling Ray, and I'll tell you," she said, "some cheering news. And that is that I came near being an

idiot last night, but I'm sane and safe this morning."

He looked keenly at her.

"That is news," was his comment, his

brow darkening.

In the many days of avoidance which followed, Georgette found it an easier task to escape the sight of him than she had feared; for there ensued a mellow spell of "haying weather," and the entire male population of the valley took to the fields. The dry warmth of the air was filled with the sweetness of cut grass, and from all the sunny hill slopes far and near the daytime rang musically with men's voices calling orders to the horses and the field hands, while hour after hour the high-piled wagons creaked steadily down the lanes from the main roads.

Not only did the hay demand attention, but all the sluggard berries which had dallied with unripeness through June, made up their minds to mature at one and the same time; consequently currants reddened, and gooseberries browned, and huckleberries blued, all in riotous unity, entailing a fearful amount of picking, and shucking, and canning.

"And Horace is working himself to death," discovered Rachel finally, appealing to Georgette. "He looks ill. Have you noticed him, Miss Verlaine?"

"Yes."

"And don't you think he looks white, and worried, and queer?"

"Yes."

"What do you suppose can be the matter with him?"

"It-it would be hard to tell."

"He needs rest."

"How about you, Ray?"

"Why, I do rest—at night. But Horry goes to his room, and reads, and reads, and often when I wake in the middle of the night I can hear him walking, walking, walking, till it fair sets me wild. And with it all, he is working first thing in the morning, and last thing in the evening. I wish you'd speak to him."

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"If you don't mind. Men are so apt to take as gospel from some one else the very advice they pooh-pooh from their home folk. Will you?"

"What do you want me to say to

him?

"Tell him not to be so conscientious; tell him to take a sort of vacation from duties for a while; tell him to sort of stop considering me and the children, and to give himself up more to his own peace and happiness.

"I will not!" broke in Georgette sharply. Then, as Rachel opened her eyes in gentle surprise: "Tell him your-

self, Ray."
"I have," said Rachel wistfully. "But he is very irritable and nervous, lately,

to talk to."

"And you're afraid of him," finished Georgette. "Well," with a fantastic appreciation of the hidden truth, "so am

"Are you going huckleberrying with us to-morrow?" asked Rachel, passing easily from the one domestic problem

to the other.

"Indeed, I am not!" exploded Georgette, who had been beguiled once into a similar excursion, and had not yet gotten over the back-breaking, sunburned horror of it. Berrying ranked with haymaking in point of stress, imperativeness, and discomfort.

"We just have to go," explained Rachel. "For it is getting near to August now, when the berries begin to

grow worms."

"Oh, Ray! If so, then have I ate

my last, last huck!"

"Everything grows wormy in time," added Rachel placidly, "if we don't pick it when it should be picked. We'll be gone all day. So if I set out your lunch, Miss Verlaine, you won't mind waiting on yourself, will you?"

"No, you soft-hearted martyr, I on't. But why an all-day labor? won't. Where do you go to pick huckleberries?

Alaska?"

"We go eight miles from here, to

Bald-top hills.

"Eight miles for a huckleberry." "Oh, Horry'll get us there in less than two hours, the road's good."

The next morning, the dead silence in the deserted house awakened Geor-

gette more abidingly than its wonted noise could have done, and, after she had lonesomely foraged for bread and milk, and choked it down in dejection, she found herself facing the long day at an hour far earlier even than her usual one.

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"So I'll grab this chance to go down to the bottom of my trunk," she informed herself drearily. "I haven't once

got there since May.

As she progressed in her pursuit, her mercurial spirits began to rise with the unearthing of many odds and ends of dainty dress which she had forgotten to such an extent that they appealed to her as practically new. And when the appeal was very strong, indeed, she tried the garment on. By the time, though, that she had disentombed and donned a silken dressing gown, barbarous and beautiful with gold braid and goldfringed sash, she found a prize which, though small in bulk, was large enough in importance to put clothes entirely out of her head.

For, among her mail, which had arrived just before she had taken the train for Crooning Water, and which Cora had thrown wildly into the trunkmostly all cards, and bills, and invitations-was a package from her manager, which resolved itself into a manuscript copy of the play "Zarna," which was then taking Europe by storm.

And not only because Xenia Ketrodoff plays it, and plays it for all there is in it, but because it's the hottest stuff that has been written for a century. Read it and agree with me that there isn't a skirt on this side of the pond who can come within a thousand miles of playing it. It's me to import the Ketrodoff and make my glittering pile. Yours, all to the marmalade,

Curled up on the floor, an exotic and iridescent creature in her bizarre gown, Georgette fascinatedly read the play through. Then she went back to the beginning, and read it through again.

'Duff's darn near right," she whispered grudgingly. "None of us could touch it with a ten-foot pole; but, Hopping Hiram, how I'd like to try!"

Having a lightning study, she soon memorized the words, and by noon she had worked out Zarna's psychology, and had clearly conceived the characteriza-

"And it's not only hot stuff, Duff, me boy, but hungry stuff!" she informed the atmosphere, as, stiff and famished, she got up off the floor, and went creeping down through the desolate house in search of lunch.

Swallowing it more as a matter of business than enjoyment, she was soon up in her room again, acting scene after scene to herself, gaining a weird, mesmeric help from the acting ancestry behind her, till there were times when she well knew she had come very near, indeed, to achieving what Duff had claimed was impossible.

Finally reaching the saturation point, she shook the whole thing from her, and, in a condition of thrilled, excited, elated exhaustion, she sat on the floor heside her low window casement, her tired—but happy—head on its open sill; and gave herself over to warm dreams of success—or tried to—but insidiously, only half heard at first, then clearer and clearer, with insistence, came the subtle secret message of Crooning Water. In the still, hot silence of the ordinarily bustling farm, the sound of the brook now had a new loudness and nearness, which seemed the result of mysticism and magic.

And its message was so poignantly defined! Trickling, purling, purring, crooning from rock to rock, rippling from bend to bend, its restless flow sang the song intrusted to it, so that the hay-scented air caught the same words, and taught it to the rustling leaves and waving branches, till all the myriad voices of throbbing, perfumed summer took them up in dreamy choral: "He loves you!"

Stage, orchestra, footlights, paint and patches, tawdriness and shamming, applauding people—all died from her inner vision, and the wide world narrowed down to one sturdy agrarian, brown-handed with toil, but with the keen eyes and lean jaws of the student and thinker.

When conjured into her thought, his image always dominated it so that his

visible presence hardly seemed more real. Kneeling there by the window, she visualized him so completely that her senses took no warning account of the faint fragrance of cigar smoke which curled lazily upward—a masculine incense, which seemed to fit naturally with the incantation scene going dreamily on in her mind—to the cadence of Crooning Water's message.

Even his voice, at first, failed to startle, coming to her ears with its wellknown, quiet, dogmatic, steady resonance, which as often angered as thrilled her.

"Come down, Miss Verlaine. I must speak with you."

She never lifted her head, but her heart pounded suffocatingly, till she heard the audible beat of it rather than the actual words, which now came a second time:

"I said: Come down, Miss Verlaine. I must speak with you."

Confusedly obedient, she jumped to her feet, pinned her hair into some semblance of order, went through the extravagant characteristic of washing her dusty small palms in cologne, and attempting to cool her dream-flushed cheeks in it; then stole from her room, half aflame to meet him, half coldly unconsenting.

While slipping with the reluctance of a shadow from stair to stair, she heard him striding across the rooms below and into his library.

Entering, she found him there, standing beside his shelves of books, some of which, the most familiar volumes, he kept taking up and examining with curious intentness, as if they had been old bric-a-brac in a strange man's house, seen now for the first time.

"What on earth are you doing here, when you ought to be Bald-topping?" she asked, with nervous flippancy.

In the complete silence which followed, she found some sort of an answer for herself, as, glancing through the window, she saw Bonnie Boy, saddleless, but bridled, tied to the gate at the end of the long grape arbor, his high head drooping slightly, as if worn with weariness.

"Well," she went on sharply, "did you call me down just to look at me?"

"No," he said, with his maddeningly slow positiveness. "But the sight of you as you stand there would make a perfect excuse, even for that. Your eyes are always slanting, and bewildering, and star-gleaming; but just now they are still more so, and I get dazzled in the—the mesh of them, and it takes me a moment or so to collect my words. And that is the oddest, loveliest dress I ever saw—outside of a Biblical picture."

"Biblical!"

"Oriental," he amended, methodically finishing the dress question before taking up the reason for his being there.

He leaned his elbow on the topmost of the shelves, and rested his head against his hand, looking determinedly down at the books, as though to exclude her while he got his words to-

gether.

"Well," he said finally, looking up—and the white weariness of his face, haggard with the pain of an unwon fight, struck accusingly at her heart—"I have tried to reason myself back to conventional sanity, but—but—have failed. It was hard enough to keep you from my thoughts before—before——" While hesitating for words, he expressed them wholly by his action, for, in slow remembrance, he seemed again to hold her against his breast. Her face, already softly flushed,

deepened distressfully.

"And since," he went on, "it has grown impossible. You are a part of my whole life. Whether I am working in the fields, or walking this lonely floor at night, or standing at dawn beneath your window, separated from you whether by miles or dreams, yet I seem to hold your hand in mine, and to talk to you, and to hear you talk. So long as I do not know where you are. I am in a frenzy of unrest; but as soon as I hear you come into the house, even though I know I will not see you, still a quick, happy peace comes to me. I could give you hundreds of these trivial details-but why? For the whole thing is summed up in this: That I love you, and I must have you! Wait, don't speak yet, till you have answered this question: Have you succeeded in making me

nothing to you?"

Aware suddenly of the insufferable heat in the room, she went to the door-like French window which she had opened on the night of the storm, and again flung it wide. And, as if she had thereby turned the key which wound a music box, there came in on the summer breeze the song of Crooning Water, the song that would go on forever, by night, by day, in rain, in sun, for life, through death.

He put his question once more: "Have you succeeded in making me

nothing to you?"

"I think of you always. And you

know it."

The pain deepened on his face, and he leaned his head again upon his hand. "I am going to New York to-morrow!" she continued vehemently.

"I shall follow and find you."
"No," she pleaded gently, "you wouldn't be so dastardly, knowing that

it is because I love you that I must

"I shall follow and find you. And when I follow, and when I find you, I shall be free to offer you——" He opened his arms, and stretched them toward her; then dropped them wordlessly by his side. "For I shall have told to——"

He paused, unable to bring Rachel's name to his betraying, suffering lips—Rachel, limpid-eyed, faithful, with the gentle bosom of a Madonna, against which a baby was always resting. Horace followed this picture reverently, till it faded from the unworthy shrine of his mind.

"I shall have told—her—everything." Georgette wrung her hands helplessly, unable to ward from her the full meaning of his words.

"Oh. no! Not-not-"

Her stammer died into silence; but her eyes, as she fastened them on his, mirrored dramatically the whole sordid tragedy to come—the insulted, tortured wife; the deserted children; the betrayed home; the trayesty of divorce. Evading nothing of the truth, he showed his acquiescent sorrow at the terrible inevitableness of it, by folding his arms upon the shelf, and hiding his stricken face within them. So might a general have stood, the victor of a desired vantage point, won by the blood and lives of those who had enlisted under his banner.

"It simply shall not be," whispered Georgette, half to herself. "I am going now—now! And you are to stay—

where you belong.'

As she tried to pass him on her quick way to the door, he looked up triumphantly at her, and detained her by her two wrists.

"Where I belong? Yes. And where is that? You know, and you shall tell

me."

"Don't be rough!" flamed Georgette, the ignoble banality of her expression adding to her fear and quickly rising temper.

He tightened his grasp. "Tell me that you don't want me to come, and I'll stay here," he promised, his eyes blazing to match her own anger.

Whatever answer was on her lips, it died while she watched the joyous, boyish relief which brightened his young face when he caught, evidently for the first time, the low, pulsing, constant rhythm of Crooning Water.

Hearing, he defied her.

"Tell me you don't want me to

come!"

A second time within the brief half hour, she recognized the absolutely unconquerable persistence of his questioning, and she wrenched one hand free, striking the mouth that triumphed over her, striking with the hate that only love can bring, the love that made her kiss it afterward, as she whispered:

"I can't say it, Horace; I can't say

it! You must come!"

CHAPTER IX.

While the train was crawling to its standstill, Georgette saw by the flaming posters of "Ketrodoff!" and others bearing the likewise solitary word, "Zarna!" that her manager had realized

the height of his desire, and that his "glittering pile" was to start its perhaps dubious glow that very evening.

"Good for Demmy," she said to herself—Duff's first name being outrageously Demetrius. "With a star like Xenia Ketrodoff twinkling in his front yard, it will be hard for him to see a bit of dust from the Milky Way like me. There's Cora!"

"Ah, the pleasure to welcome you, mam'selle," beamed the maid, helping her mistress from the coach, and re-

lieving her of baggage.

"Now I know I'm young again," commended Georgette. "You madame'd me at parting. Where do I live these days, Cora?" She had telegraphed the maid to find suitable apartments for her.

So Cora volubly explained, and graphically illustrated the new quarters to Georgette's entire satisfaction.

"Have I got a bathtub?" she interpolated, putting a ghastly short stop to the calisthenics of description.

"Ah, to a great certainty!" defended Cora, as if repelling a charge of felony. "Who lives, I ask you, defrauded of a

bathtub?"

"Haven't seen a real bath for over three months, Cora—solemn truth. Go home and fill it up to the brim with hot water, for neither have I seen—come to think of it, though, I have been in hot water since leaving. Go, Cora! Do as I tell you. No, don't wait for me."

For, bearing leisurely in her direction, was a long-coated, conspicuous-looking man, whom she recognized as Yes Smith, whom, for some inscrutable reason, she had telegraphed to meet her. She studied him invitationally till he finally arrived beside her.

"Well, George?" he temporized, leaving the real initiative to her, as was his cool custom with everybody, he having been too long rich and important to need to make first moves of any sort.

"Maybe so," was her reply. She was quite as indolent as he, and he chafed plainly to see it. "Don't hurry me," she went on. "Give me all the joys of recognition." And she continued to look him over.

Size and equipment made him of distinguished appearance, and his visible freedom from conventional moralities gave him an assured poise and balance which is always lacking in dissipation which harks back occasionally to reform and its consequent regrets. His eyes, though sated with the delight of life to the point of cold calmness, were not in the least tired, but looked keenly ready for anything that was expected of them. His face and figure were full, just saved from being heavy or coarse by reason of perfect health-a good circulation having indubitable advantages over mere good conscience as a human beautifier. His hands were the fat, white members which usually belong to a retired tenor, which he was not, rather than to a suspended horseman, which he was,

"You find me the same?" he inquired carefully, his slow sarcasm being tempered by his unresentment of a scrutiny which could not fail to discover in him certain merits, if only of cloth, and

linen, and valuable stones.

"A trifle the samer," acknowledged she, not entirely in compliment. Then she extended her hand, "How do you

do?" she asked affably.

He, too, put out his hand; but he used it to bear hers down, and eventually back to its place against her dress. This accomplished, he laid his other hand quietly upon her shoulder, asked: "Why waste time by going back to before the place where we left off?" and kissed her.

"What a place for us to leave off!" commented Georgette easily. "Am I to follow you, or are you gone?"

"Neither. You are to be by my side, I hope"—with his affectation of deference which came so near being the real article as to deceive even himself. "Just

a step to my car, George."

It was showily near. With its two liveried men, its array of brass, its polished doors, and balustraded top, all it needed was a lobby and an elevator to turn it quite into a hotel. Georgette stepped thankfully into the retirement and comforts of its huge interior. Yes Smith took his place beside her.

He stared at her carefully for a long time, not in affection, tolerance, or dislike—only thoughtfully.

"What's your game, George?" he asked finally, with untroubled softness. "Having you meet me?" she asked.

He nodded, but amended: "Asking me. For I intended not to come."

She laughed with quiet enjoyment.

"I felt that way, too—which answers your question about my game."

"I am a gamble with you—is that what you mean?" he asked, after a few

minutes' brooding.

"Exactly. I never know what you'll do, and I never care what you'll do; but I care wonderfully to find out. When I'm interested, you bore me; but when I'm bored, I find you interesting."

"You were bored in the country?"

"Odd times."

"And in one of the oddest you sent me the message?" His voice betrayed anger, less toward her than himself. "And I don't know whether to make you glad you sent, or eventually sorry!"

She smiled in sincere appreciation of the thorough way he was coming up to

her requirements of him.

"If you have the leisure, and will have the kindness, to take me to diner, Yes, you may arrive at decision between the courses."

"Dinner at this hour, George?" The hour, not the deed, dismayed him.

"I breakfasted last May," she reminded him ingratiatingly.

"Good Lord! Poor girl!"

She happily kissed her finger tips in his relenting direction, hearing complete assent in his commiseration,

"Fix the place, take me home, give me a half hour to dress, a half hour more to join you; and let the rest take care of itself," she arranged gayly.

Which he finally agreed to do, after vainly trying to show her that he had better let the car wait at her door for

ier.

"Ah, Cora, my devoted and underpaid angel!" was Georgette's tribute, after she had made admiring circuit of her apartments, had turned on and off all the electric attachments out of pure glee at being again in luxurious connection with such things, and had actually called: "Hullo, folkses!" through the telephone into astonished space, just to get the balm of the various clicks into her long-exiled ear. "You did wonders—as you always do. There is the dear old piano, bless its heart! And now make me presentable, if that is not beyond you."

A magic half hour later:

"There, then!" exploded Cora, finishingly leading her to the long pier glass in the parlor, that she might get a full-length-portrait view of herself in her new white-and-tan gown. "Is it not a pairrfec' primrose that mam'selle is in the likeness of?"

Out in the turmoil and crash of her adored city. Georgette grew fairly intoxicated with the whirl and clamor of it; her alertness of brain and muscle rising inexhaustibly to the demands made upon it, her happy recognitions showering left and right, as she encountered her many friends, not one of whom but had a sincerely delighted word for her. The very beggars threw her a welcoming smile, forgetting the scowl of trade.

As she neared the block where Duff's theater was, the bills of "Zarna" grew bigger, and lurider, and frequenter than

"Duff's put his all in it," mused Geor-

gette, smiling.

But when she actually bumped into him, a step or so farther on, he had none of the radiant signs that he was strictly due to bear, considering a house sold out for that very night. His hat was shoved dejectedly off a face which gloomed whitely with real despair. But he called up a smile for Georgette.

"Why, ah, there, Banana Fritters!" he welcomed, shaking both her hands at once, and appraisingly noting her joyous health. "So glad you didn't die. Last Rose of Summer was nothing to you when you went away, and here you are in bud again. Bully for you, Sunrise on Mount Blanc—bully for you!"

"But for you?" queried Georgette,

shaking herself finally loose. "What on earth is it?"

"Oh, me!" he cried, slumping back into his pallid dejection. "My luck's up. It's got the Consumptive's last cough."

"Surely not with these things around?" comforted Georgette, point-

ing to the "Zarnas."

Demetrius Duff fairly groaned, wiping his dry brow with the raving gesture of one who pulls impending madness from it.

"That's just it, you Soldier's Dream of Home—just it," he explained. "Been up to see the Ketrodoff, and what do you think, Annie and Willie's Prayer—what do you think? She's on the road to pneumonia. Two doctors and a trained nurse. The real thing. And me in a hole big enough to lose Teddy in. Oop-ta-ra, oop-ta-ra, tee-ree-ree!" He sang with a touching, requiem melancholy. His brief day was evidently moribund.

"Duff!" hissed Georgette. "Put me

on for to-night as Zarna."

He waved out a hand, as if to brush madness from her own brow, too; then begged, quite pleadingly:

"Go gently, Hashish; go gently. Don't kid on the last round. I'm up against it, and dead in earnest."

"No more in earnest than I, Duff." She slipped her arm through his, and walked him rapidly toward his theater, the while she told him excitedly of her mastery of the part, and her belief in her own power to play it. "All I ask is a rehearsal. Call up the cast, or as many as you can rake in, and put one through—now—this very second!" she finished breathlessly.

"But the part takes brains, Froebel's Pet; it takes brains," he insisted dissuadingly. "The play is a man's play, and Ketrodoff was drilled by the author. Where would you come in?"

"Oh, fluff for man's brains and woman's brains, Duff! Where's the dif?"

"In the box-office receipts, Sweetness. Take yourself, Peaches and Cream; unless some man starts you, you haven't the mentality of a ten-yearold child." "That may be true, Duff," she agreed, though snapping her fingers under his retreating nose, as if to waken him from a trance. "But explain this: Why does any man give himself the trouble to 'start' me unless the ten-year-old mentality appeals companionably to the age of his own? Nor am I unique in having to be started. Which everything needs—the race, religions, motions, motors, men, and mules. Call that rehearsal!"

"Why, shine on, shine on, Moonbeams over the Hudson," he said admiringly. "You've got the talk down pat, anyhow. Come on and rehearse, then. Small harm it'll do a soul. And as little

good, I'm thinking.'

Entering the theater with her, by way of the foyer, and there telephoning hurry-up calls to as many of his performers as he could reach, he was in a more anticipative mind by the time he stood at last upon the half-lit stage, making his usual stern preparations for the fray, and he lost no time in starting things.

Though Duff while on the street, or in society, was of indeterminate nationality, discreetly cosmopolitan, seeming suavely to be to each what each desired him to be, Duff on the stage at rehearsal was so Irish that the boards might have been turf, and the side scenes shamrock, and yet not have "set"

him in emerald enough.

Moreover, when he raved reproaches at his performers till he scorched their very eyebrows, they subtly cheered up, knowing they were doing well enough to be considered worthy of help. Conversely, when Duff said to his actor, "That'll do fine. Play it any way you think best," it was clear that the luckless creature's substitute was already located in Duff's intentions.

Consequently Georgette's hopes ran high, when, after her first scene—with quite a handful of the cast to help her out—Duff's teeth began to grit, and his

wearily polite sarcasms to fly.

"My, my! And will you hear that? Sobs from the Cell! I'm wondering now, Mr. So-and-so—indeed, it's wondering I am—if you have a glimmer of an idea of what your lines really

mean." But the last word was "mane," as near as a toucher. "Yes, a glimmer. That's what I said. And meant. What's that? Oh, you have? I'm glad—that's good! Then, do! See you do. Your cue now."

Then Georgette rocketed through another scene, nervously reaching a great height of goodness. Duff became rabid, and, furiously grabbing chalk, marked out spots for furniture and setting, which, naturally enough, would not be

in place till night.

And from that moment things raced on to really meritorious conclusion, Duff becoming so touched with the pathos of the play's ending that he forbore sarcasms as to the uncertain beginning, and

was his natural self.

"It's sink or swim with us both, Deliciousness; sink or swim with us both," confided Duff, when, the rehearsal over, and the actors sped to their short rest, he and she were rushingly attending to the million and one things which remained to be seen to. Every known aid of messenger, wire, and telephone was being worked nineteen to the dozen, and costumes were being tried on and altered, scenes were being set, and the hammering and confusion almost passed belief. "But are you right in having no announcement made before the rise of the curtain?"

"Absolutely. To do that would be simply to invite distrust. Have nothing said. If I fail, though—then have my name mentioned. I don't want to saddle Xenia with failure and pneumonia. And if I succeed, tip the critics in time

for the morning papers.'

"And you don't think, Joy of New York, that half the audience will know you the minute you step on?"

"Ah, I've been gone three months,"

airily purred Georgette.

"And the good it's done you fair staggers me. There's no denying you were always clever; but nails, Georgette Verlaine, nails! What *learned* you to feel?"

"I fell in love with a married man, Demmy; and the wonderful originality of the experience must have unfettered my soul"

"Hah!" Duff snorted again with ap-

preciation of her diablerie of expression. "Then, if two will help you, fall in love with me, Congestion on Fifth Avenue, get a move on, and fall in love with me, for after your steppin' in at the eleventh hour to save, my heart's at your feet." Here, for the first time, he took his hat off, to make more deferent his grateful shaking of her hands. "And now be off home with you for a bite or sup, for it's all of six o'clock, and you must be back here by seven."

by seven."

"And I'm starving!" remembered Georgette. Then she remembered something else, too, beginning to laugh softly. "Duff, I've lost the best dinner ever. Had an engagement with Yes Smith."

"Have you? You're one ahead of the whole city, then, for sure it's chasing him like mad. He must have thrown over dozens of clubs and whatnots, if he's made a date with you this soon."

"Not 'has,' " contradicted Georgette lightly, "Had. It is all over now. It was for three hours ago, I forgot all about it."

Duff put on his hat, and whistled long and ominously.

"He won't" he promised warningly.

CHAPTER X.

Georgette used to have panting visions of the hour when stiff-necked managers would be the beseechers instead of the besought, when audiences would be begging recipients instead of patrons, when emolument would be figured as "profits" rather than as "salary" in an ignominious pay envelope, when her name should be spelled in electricity across the whole front of the house; but these dreams had been freely acknowledged, even by herself, to be in the nature of "pipes," the fantasies of hope's opium, rather than any actual goal to be reached by organized endeavor.

Yet now into her idle lap Fortune chose to empty the fullness of her horn, to bestow as a free gift the reward of labor for which labor might go begging, and does.

The success of "Zarna's" first night was without precedent, bewildering the very ones who had hoped for it. Just as "Zarna" had captured Georgette, so Georgette in turn captured her audience; and it showed its allegiance by thunder after thunder of applause, good, solid; roof-lifting American applause, punctuated occasionally by the excitement of the transatlantic tribute: "Bravo, Verlaine!"

The papers next morning gave colums of analysis and praise, and pictures of Georgette from childhood to now, all miraculously embalmed somewhere, and kept for this problematic moment,

appeared on every page.

Success, which so often wrecks a disposition which has hitherto passed for fine, and causes an arriver to forget the help of those by whom arrival was made possible, seemed to add just the one touch of softness and sincerity needed to improve Georgette. She enjoyed the whole thing immensely, but as an accident, not as a tribute; consequently her manner was as unprideful as ever; and she refrained from getting nerves, or tempers, or headaches, or haughtinesses, or any of the other

The only noticeable change in her was that she dressed better than ever, and grew undeniably prettier. True, she slept less—at the proper time, that is—but this defect she remedied often by day.

conventional impedimenta of genius.

And one afternoon while Cora tucked a silk cover over her as she lay lissomely low on her couch in the parlor, and said—evidently to an interloper—"She wakes very soon, sir; she had better be allowed to sleep—at your polite kindness," Georgette refused to come back from the borderland of dreams where she already was, and drifted right over into unconsciousness, letting the strange "sir" wait.

Then into that long unconsciousness came eventually the strains of music, bringing consciousness. Some one was playing her piano exquisitely, but in cold, clean harmonies, which seemed to accuse rather than to allure. Perhaps the air was to blame, for it was "Ein

Feste Burg," that ponderously grand choral beloved of the stern Luther.

"Must be John Congdon," realized Georgette, springing up in welcome to him. "I knew it!" she cried gayly. "How are you? And why haven't you been before? Speak up! Don't play

on as if I wasn't here!"

Though his eyes turned to her in his otherwise immovable face, yet play on he did, evidently talking through the instrument, his soul absorbed in the full chords, sharing the sternness of them. When the last one trembled coldly to its extinction, leaving the room thrilled with premonition and warning, he said, his hands still on the keys.

"I have had a letter from Horace."
The smile died on her lips, though she did not know why, being aware that, in all likelihood, her name would be infrequent to absence—so far as the letter

was concerned.

She came close to the piano, and faced the trouble, whatever it might be; her slim, white prettiness resting effectively against the polished rosewood. Her jeweled fingers played with the fringe of the cover.

"Well?" she probed.

"If it only were!" cried Congdon fiercely. "In it he says—" That is

as far as he got.

After a pause, he went on: "Georgette, there are women called bad; but not one of them has wronged a sister woman, or pulled down a home, or robbed little children—as you have done."

She dropped the fringe, and caught

his hand fiercely.

"Don't say such things!"

"Why not?"

She flung his hand from her in part

"My side is to be considered, too."
"Your side!" He laughed shortly.
"Your—you—the same story! What is ever considered but your side? I know you so well—and you've proved my knowledge. It was Horace I did not know—fool that I was!"

"You spoke too surely of him," flared Georgette. "You would have served him better by telling me: 'He is young, impressionable, restless, sensitive, affectionate—apt to take your levity for more than its face value—be careful of him.' And I would have been. I have never yet played upon a man's weakness. But upon his strength—ah, that is another thing! It always tempts me to try to break it—to show him that it is pretense, and that I know it is pretense."

He had listened for a second to hear if she had any real thing to say, and, on finding that she had not, he let her ramble on, the while he walked agitatedly back and forth, exclaiming:

"'Separating from Rachel!" Why, the impossible cruelty of it! And the cruel impossibility! He can leave her, but he can no more separate himself from Rachel than from his own birth, his own boyhood, by growing beyond them. Rachel, of all women, to be abandoned! Rachel, who went to school with him, who went chestnuting with him, who rode to the cider mill with him, who drove to picnics with him, who walked to church with him, who grew up by his side from dear child to dear woman—Rachel! Separating from Rachel! And for you!"

As she raised her head proudly and defiantly, Georgette looked, at that moment of accusation, anything but un-

worthy of a man's regard.

"Yes?"

"Doctor," she said oddly. His profession, rather than himself, gave heed.

"There is much in your mind which makes 'Nature' an excuse for many things of puzzling strength—for instance, Nature, stanch Nature, makes Rachel a true wife, a born mother; the same Nature, capricious now, makes Horace turn from the gloom of steadfastness to the flickers of levity—for rest. Therefore are both of them to be treated with charity; she to be protected, he to be pitied. For me, though, nothing but blame. Is there no Nature here"—and she pressed her hands against her heart—"which may cry out for its own—yes, and reach for it—but keep honest?"

"Then you love him?" broke from

him in amazement. "Why, not Horace! You couldn't!'

"Couldn't?" "You couldn't."

She broke into a laugh which, although mocking, was incomparably sweet; and under the spell of the sound he clutched his hands at his sides, say-

Oh, I see well how a man could go mad for you. You ride the wave, Georgette; you ride the wave-he would clutch toward you for stability as a spent swimmer clutches at straws. At the top of things—that's your disposition—at the top of things, like froth, and scum-"

"And why not cream?" she threw in. "The very putting of the question in this connection answers your 'why not?' But I can't think of you, just now, Georgette; but of Rache, my tall, straight girl. Did you know-do you know-how old she is? Not yet twentyfour, and facing this. 'To separate.' It has an easy sound, and short, but it is as hard as life is hard, and long as

"Georgette, listen. Let me tell you something that you won't believe-you, who have seen so little of man's restraint. And it is this: At every man's heart, good or bad though he may be, there is an inborn veneration for woman, so deep that never, never, would he

say to her the word that should not be spoken, unless and until the permission within her had paved safe way for him. Flash your eyes, and stamp your feet. The truth is a basic one.

"Man's truth! Perhaps woman has a basic one, too!"

"Perhaps she has; Rache and I'd like to hear it. Poor Rache! Alone! It's the prose of this I can't get away from. What's the name of the oldest

death is long.

"You mean Pauline?"

"Pauline. I can hear her." His eyes flinched with pain. Like all big men of strength so virile that it passes oftener than not for brutality, he suffered tortures where a child's suffering was concerned. "Can't you hear her, Georgette? 'Marma, where's dadda?'-whatever it is she calls him. And wouldn't it be easier for Rache, built the way she is, to answer: 'With God, my baby,' than to shut her white lips over words that dare not be said? Now, if Rache would only marry again-" He stared hopefully into space.

Ray!" exclaimed "Marry again!

Georgette involuntarily.

"Of course not. His brief hope died. No-she couldn't. She wouldn't think it decent. Nor would it be-for Rache. Didn't she have to say something about 'God's holy ordinance' in the marriage ceremony?"

"Never was married," apologized

Georgette for not knowing.

He hardly heard her, so keenly was he realizing the stand at Crooning Water. He even called Georgette into his confidence, forgetting her so truly that he forgot even her complicity.

"And, say, Georgettestopped his restless pacing and took up his position with his back to the tall mirror, the squaring of his shoulders showing militantly in it, as if he were preparing to bear up under the hardest sight of all.

"Yes, John Congdon, of the magical-

ly unleashed tongue?"

"Do you know what will happen some winter night? Croup. And Rache alone. With Homer—that fat-throated little baby-choking to death, while his father dawdles around somewhere, and smokes a cigar, and theorizes on destiny. Can't you see her? Fighting the thing off till it gets beyond a fight? Not daring to leave? Alone! Then her frantic dash down to the barn-rat-infested, snake-ridden place-to saddle a fierce beast, and to ride him wildly through the blackness to God knows where, in search of a doctor, who will come too late?"

"Oh, stop!" stormed Georgette hys-

terically. "You old woman!

"You look as if these things are not in line to happen. Well, they are. Horace tells me he will be here in a few days, the 'separation' over."

'Here!"

"Um-here! In a city! What'll he do in a city? How live? He's given the farm to Rache—so he says. Good of him, isn't it? He might better have laid her in six feet of it! And he'll be here."

"Here!"

That was all she could say. She stepped in front of him, and took hold of his watch chain, twisting it.

He carefully rescued it, looking cherishingly at it, as if to see if the minute

had tarnished it.

"Yes. Pretty set-out, isn't it?—for Horace. All he can do is plow, and plant, and read, and pray; and he can do one as well as the other in this hot hell of hurry. What's the end for the poor boy?"

"Boy?" She smiled sarcastically. "I

wouldn't worry about him."

"I know you wouldn't. But I would. And it seems to me that even granting you never thought of Rache, and never thought of Horace, in this matter, the sheer selfish thought for yourself would have frightened you away from taking the risk."

"What risk?"

"Certainty-rather-of failure."

"Oh, speak out! You've had practice enough, this last half hour!"

On the point of answering, his mind suddenly went off on a new tack, and he was long silent, while he thoroughly explored the place it took him to.

She was well acquainted with this tacitum trick of his, and knew how impossible it was to shake him back to speech until he should be ready.

Though his eyes kept themselves fastened upon her, it was quite evident that it was some time before he really saw her. When at last he did, he drew a long breath of resolve, and asked:

"Georgette, will you marry me?"

He folded his arms upon his broad chest, and frowned at her, looking more like a gladiator sizing up an opponent than a lover making his protestation.

"If I were only a doctor, now, with a quirk for music," she said evenly, and with a gentleness that was too honeyed for sincerity, "I ought to sit down upon this stool, and majestically play through "Varum?" for you to answer—if you

dared. I dare speak the Why? I always dare. It's: Will I marry you, to save Ray and Horace?"

"Yes.

"No, I will not!"

"Why not?"
"Do you love me, John Congdon?

Say yes, and I'll say yes!"

He stared at her as impassively as before, and showed that he was mentally retracing his steps back to the junction point where he had taken his siding. His proposal was over and done with.

"All right, I will speak out. Do you know what you will have to be to him, Georgette, to make up to him for all

you've torn him from?"

"That's my business!" she defied him,

face to face.

"Yes, it is. That's just the point. You must not only be sweetheart and wife, as Rache was, but mother, too, even as she is mother to him-and you must be his children. But there's even more. For, what has a city to give him in exchange for his life inheritance in the hills? Can you be for him the strength of the mountains, the courage of the broad dawns, the peace of the silent nights? Georgette, Georgette, look at yourself!" He stood aside, leaving her face to face with her fulllength reflection in the long glass. She straightened radiantly as she looked. "Pretty-oh, pretty enough!" he conceded impatiently. "With soft lips, and curved chin, and shining hair, and eyes of dancing lights; the facé of you seeming to be an opal set round with pearls, your dress the satin case that jewels come in, and you as valueless as they. Yes, as valueless! Oh, jewels costthey cost. I know that well-as much as a man chooses to pay away for them. But they are valueless. And for that boy who gives up his all for you, what can you give him in return but—a kiss?"

And her intellect, trained in the sound of apt lines to bring the curtain down in triumph, gave an answer, and gave it so in the tones of the heart as to

strike his taunts to silence.

Her eyes vanquished his in the glass. "Another one?" she stormed superbly.

CHAPTER XI.

"You'll never ask me to dinner again, will you?" said Georgette to Yes Smith, point-blank, meeting him on the street

one day.
"No," he replied, making a subtly careful appraisement of her cleverness of dress, by which she managed to outshine every other woman alive, and yet—as Duff put it—"keep on the pleasantest of terms with the police force."

If Yes Smith had any weakness at all, it was his desire to be seen with the best-dressed woman of the season. "Well," smiled she cheerfully, "that

leaves breakfast, lunch, and supper. I never cared much for dinner, anyhow."

"Not for mine!" He weighed this out carefully. His words were always noticeably heavy with suggestion, falling on the ear with thumps of warning. "What explanation?" he asked, frowning over the remembrance of her abuse.

Just here, an Armenian candy seller worked past, his tray of dainties slung to his neck, and his opera-bouffe voice chantier.

chanting:
"Buy Zarna kisses!" which articles
were in evidence on the tray, and were
chrome yellow in color, viscidly sticky,
and twisted into papers, like dangerous
torpedoes.

"There goes the explanation," she said, with burlesque pride. "I'm the confectionery of the hour. Honest, Smith, you can't really afford to keep mad."

"I myself think I can even up better by being friendly."

"Is that a nice thing said hatefully, or a hateful thing said nicely?"

"Time will prove."

"'And may God have mercy on your soul.'" quoted Georgette amiably, from the death sentence. "Sounded just like that. Kwee!" In one of her instantaneous freaks of mimicry, she went through a choking scene, as of some malefactor dying by the rope, her face distorted, her eyes popping. "My last prayer from the gallows: Supper, Smith!"

And in that undecided fashion, active hostilities were dropped. Georgette

had been quite right in her estimation of his feelings—he could not really afford to be on bad terms with a reigning celebrity. Consequently supper eventuated. And others followed.

One evening, after the performance, while Georgette was still in her dressing room, putting the final touches to her private costume, a particularly dazzling one, owing to the supper and the musical that were to follow, Cora, who had been summoned outside shortly before, came back with a nonchalantly announced message. She knew how little heed would be paid to it.

"A man at the back door, Miss Verlaine, insists to have a sight at you."

"Insistence strengthens the character," said Georgette largely. She was trying Smith's new diamonds in different situations in her hair.

"Something of that nature I inform him," admitted Cora scrupulously. "It did but add, however, to the insist. He continues in waiting there."

"Do I know him? Who is it?"
"He refuse his name, saying only that

you expect him."

"No identification," said Georgette at once. "I expect too many. Cora, put your artistic eye and inartistic tongue upon this star. Have I got it in a good place?" She ducked down her glittering head for inspection.

"Indeed, marvelous!" praised Cora, fastening the diamonds.

Cloaked and radiant, Georgette swept out of the theater by the front entrance, a thoughtful concession arranged by Duff, whereby she avoided the admiring, but plain-spoken, hangers-on at the back; and was soon journeying luxuriously to the celebrated Winston's in

Smith's caravan of an auto.

The place is known by all the everybodies and all the nobodies of New York. Those who are soberly in be-

tween may know it not.

It used to be a splendid vantage ground upon which to meet New Yorkers, but so many outsiders go there for that very purpose that now one mostly goes to Winston's for the sake of seeing the see-ers. Wild and woolly young men from the Lochinvar tracts of tall

timber, who accumulate twenty whole dollars, go there and spend the mighty half of it in refreshments for three, and feel that they have thereby carved an indelible record for lavishness in the concealed mind of the waiter—who, to a calm certainty, has already pocketed twice that sum in tips, with the evening

yet new.

At her own table, Georgette had Yes Smith—naturally, since he was paying for the entertainment—also Brice Gunning, the paragraphist, and Lewis Tate, the writer of columns. And anybody who thinks that modern journalism lacks style should have seen the glossy perfection of the evening raiment of the two, and ever after keep his peace. Dukes would have looked dingy beside them.

Winston's, rather empty at the time of their coming, was rapidly filling up with new arrivals, and upon these, as they pushed by, Brice Gunning kept a sharp lookout; not because he was expecting any one, but because of being built upon the plan which misses noth-

ing if it can be helped.

Suddenly he said, apropos of two late comers, who sat down near by: "Doctor John and a convalescent jag—from the look."

No one else took any notice. Then: "Give us Danny," they clamored. Danny was an old man she had met at Crooning Water, and was her funniest

imitation.

"Waal," she began dubiously. And, by a power of mental suggestion which was wonderful, she seemed to grow into Danny before their eyes, shrinking into a peaked and grasshoppery condition, and convulsing all with the crafty oldmannishness of her.

A roar of applauding laughter greet-

ed her efforts.

"Now Henry Custard!" they cried.
"Doc's convalescent jag wants to relapse," said Brice Gunning, observing the close disturbance. "Doc's won out. Jag's back in his seat."

"Henry Custard!" was called again.
"Whoa!" bellowed Georgette obediently, adding menacingly: "Back!"
Again she subtly transformed herself and was now round-shouldered, fat, comfortable, companionable, lazy, and big of face, windblown of hair and

"Now Sport!" was the next clamor.

This was a silent mimicry made by the hands, and more intensely clever than the vocal ones. Clearing away her glasses and plate, Georgette locked her fingers together, releasing four to represent the dog's legs, and across the cleared space she copied faithfully a hound's dragging gait, varied by its furtive thought impulses.

"By Jove, that's a photograph!" cried Lewis Tate, leading an applause which the others riotously joined in. They

were not yet sated.

"Now give us Horry Dornblazer!" they besought.

"Horry Dornblazer!" commanded

Yes Smith, leaning closer.

Here there was a violent movement made by the two newcomers, the one jumping up protestingly, the other restrainingly, and while this last one—John Congdon—was pattering greetings disarmingly to the group, "Good evening, Miss Verlaine. Hullo, Brice! Same to you, Tate"—the first one, his eyes ablaze, was ripping out:

"You push the lady too hard, gentlemen, though she is complaisant, I admit. But you ask her too much. To give an imitation, a good imitation, when the original is at hand, is difficult indeed, even for a thorough actress like Miss Verlaine. I am Horace Dorn-

blazer."

Smith took a careful drink. The two journalists inclined their heads with a vagueness which immediately repudiated the salute, and Georgette said, pleasantly surprised:

"Why, how do you do?"

Still flinging around suave fragments, Congdon forced his protégé down into a new chair, and took one himself, that they might get out of the public eye, and assume an air of being peaceable adventists.

"Horace endeavored to catch you at the back door," said Congdon, as naturally as possible.

"I'm not catchable there," smiled

Georgette at Horace. She tried her honest hardest to feel any thrill of welcome or liking at the sudden sight of him, and all she could compass was the amazed and irritated wonder that anybody, even a "hobo," should dare to enter Winston's at midnight in a snuffy brown sack coat, a home-laundered shirt, a tie whose inflexible knot betrayed it as a Christmas present bought at "the" store, trousers whose peculiar cut stamped them at once as having been selected from a counter full of twin brothers, and shoes that were shoes, and no mistake.

As for his face, it showed well why Brice Gunning characterized it as belonging to a "convalescent jag," for it was very white, and was sunken, not with the weak ravages of illness, but with the strong wildness of tortured thought. These evidences, far from awakening Georgette's pity, merely increased her indignation. No man had any business to be emotional, unless to her order, on sight. Moreover, having been emotional, he had no business whatever to put himself on annoying exhibition, and prefer claims to her attention at the wrong time.

"I want to see you," shot from Horace. To him there was only one person in the room. The wonderful fairness of her in the bewildering glimmers of her evening gown lifted her so far above his commonplace realities that she seemed to him to be a creature of another world, separated from him by an invisible aura of space as impossible to cross as a line drawn by witches or fairies.

"And aren't you?" she asked, smiling again. She felt the separating aura of space, too, and it comforted her like the strength of bars between a caged lion and herself at a circus. She even dared feed peanuts.

From the airy nothingness of her words, he visibly winced, as from the stinging lash of a rawhide.

Congdon had had enough. He rose, and fairly lifted Horace with him.

"Do you suppose your good dragon of a Cora will let us wait for you at your apartments?" he asked pleasantly. Georgette's heart rushed out in gratitude to him for his bluffing casualness. "Cora's forte is letting people wait,"

she laughed.

"I shall take that as permission," he said, with a friendly bow of good night to all. And he took his dream-stalking

friend away with him,

When Georgette and her party finally reached her rooms, they found the musical in full life, it having commenced without her, knowing that it possessed her Bohemian permission. The bright medley of men and women hailed her as another comrade, rather than a hostess, which was affectionate compliment, for nobody takes precedent over another, either as guest or hostess, in bohemia.

The smallness of her apartments made it an immediate matter for Georgette to find Horace. And she went to him at once, being a person who always preferred the thick of a fight to the fear of it. Though she knew well that her real meeting with him could not be now, that the most she could do would be to put him off—get him to go away.

He rose, and grasped her hands as a drowning man might grasp a rope, and it was clear that only the most elemental sense of convention prevented him from taking her in his arms. He had said that they would be free, but her present realization was that they were empty, that he had thrown his whole life from him, and that she had nothing to offer him in return. Like Frankenstein, she had created something monstrous, homeless, that would dog her steps, that would hold her accountable.

"Send these people away," he ordered. And the note of assurance in his voice, that used to reach out like a leash and coil around her heart, taking it willing captive, now made her irritably restive.

"They have only just come," she informed him sweetly. "And if I tried to 'send' them away, they'd know something was up, and they wouldn't go, but would stay to see the fun."

"To see the-" He dropped her hands, and bent his head toward her,

as if she were speaking in a foreign tongue, of which he knew only a few words.

"The fun," she repeated.

He gave up trying to understand this. A sudden hush stilled all the hum and laughter in the room, and a few chords sounded from the piano, chords which evidently knew their business, and knew that their master was playing them. It was Duff beginning to sing "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," which ranks as an English ballad, but, like many another English ballad, takes an Irishman to sing it.

Being in tune for it as he was, it acted upon the emotional Horace with the extravagance of "Home, Sweet Home," upon an exile who hears it

abroad.

A gasping sob strangled in his throat, and he threw himself back into his chair, obeying the impulse to hide from the amused eyes which were turned in his direction.

Duff was through, and fighting his encore. He came to his hostess.

"Isn't that the fine old tune?" he asked, trying to shift the praise from his voice to the air. And surely St. Patrick must have smiled in heaven at hearing the last word's nearness to "chune."

"Denmy, you're a darling," said Georgette, with conviction, putting her two accolading hands upon his shoulders.

Horace's palms tightened as he looked.

"Ah, when it comes to darrlin's," said Duff richly; and with the thoroughness of an expert, he fully and completely kissed her.

As if Duff had been a lurching drunkard, Horace started protectingly to his feet, which seemed slowly to paralyze under him as he noted her almost unconsciousness of the caress. Her two hands were slipping affectionately down Duff's arms till his own were reached and caught persuasively.

"You've got to sing again," she prayed, pulling him gently pianoward, through an applauding throng, which widened to let them pass, and closed again around them.

Horace swayed uncertainly, like one whose mind fails to carry commands to the muscles.

"Oft in the stilly night,"

sang Duff, with magnificent tenderness. The words crept ringingly, clingingly, around the room.

"Ere slumber's chains have bound me, Fond mem'ry brings the light Of other days around me."

Horace crashed into the small vestibule, where Cora nodded in sleepy vigil over the grand heap of wraps intrusted to her.

"You tell Miss Verlaine that I am coming to-morrow noon," he commanded harshly, "and that I must, and will,

see her alone."

What the startled Cora said, being in French, had not so terrific a sound; though the English of it was flung after his disappearing form:

"Sacred Name, what a devil of a

brusqueness!"

CHAPTER XII.

"You are not ill?" That was the first thing he said to her, though it is not at all likely that the words were what he imagined himself saying by way of preliminary. Yet her look dragged the question from him, when he came at noon, as he had promised.

She was slight and pale, unlike her radiance of last night; and her morning gown, as severe as a wrapper, hung to her limply and with youthful effect. It was quite as if she had determinedly done without any of the fictitious charms of dress.

"No-sleepy," she explained.

"Oh, at last we are alone together!" he exclaimed, approaching her eagerly, his hands outstretched.

She slipped away from him, and quickly put herself on the other side of the table, keeping it between them.

"Surely you have guessed what has happened? That I no longer feel the same?" she asked, not evading the issue a moment.

"Last night some madness possessed you, or me," he parried, "because whole worlds kept us apart. It will have to be in my arms that you will tell me again, if you can, that you no longer feel-

She put her hand back of her to the

wall, where the bell push was.

"If I ring this, Cora will show in some of the boys and girls-they are playing bridge, or something, in another room. I made them come. It didn't have a comfortable sound to me -your being here and nobody else. Keep where you are till we've talked

this thing out."

"Talk it out, Georgette? It was talked out-in Crooning Water. What happened there, and what has happened since"—he paused involuntarily, dumb for the moment, speechless, at this one scant reference to the tragedy of his broken home-"leaves absolutely nothing to be 'talked out.' We must live it out now."

"All right, if the term suits you bet-

ter, we'll call it living it out. "Be serious-if never in your life

"Oh, I'm serious enough," she said quickly. "Too serious to explode and bang." She flung a look at his clenched bang." She flung a look at his clenched hand. "Don't think that I am not as amazed as you are. I could hardly believe it when I saw last night that you had become less than nothing to

"Georgette," he warned, "to be 'less than nothing' will come a trifle harder with me than to become, say, your mur-

derer!"

That sort of thing never sounds bloodcurdling enough in broad daylight," she criticized sharply. "We turn

lights down for that."

"Georgette, wait a moment," he begged, as if beseeching a truce to her hardness. "Let me see if you know -all. You remember I told you I would come to you with my arms free." He again stretched them toward her, open, waiting. "And I have comethat way." The past few weeks haunted his eyes. She could not bear the pain and bewilderment in them.

She walked restlessly to the window, staring downtown.

"John Congdon told me," she ac-

knowledged to Horace. He so swiftly took her place before the bell call that she laughed aloud.

"Oh, I could yelp 'Cora!' just as easy as push a button," she pointed out sarcastically. "How awfully dramatic you are with your 'murderer,' and your general air of 'foiled again.' We actors have to be much more careful. And now you reach toward your hip pocket. Revolver there? That's a music cue, then."

She sat down to the piano, and played a few soft bars of Duff's last, song: "Oft in the Stilly Night."

Horace drew a chair from the wall, placing it methodically for himself beside the table. He dropped into it, and, with his lax palm open on the table top, as if craving alms, he begged:

"Tell me what this is that has come to both of us. A while ago you loved me. It seemed to be the same love that mine was. My love is killing me. Yours is gone. What have I done? Or what not done, Georgette?"

Her eyes filled full of tears. Herself a creature of storms, it took quietness

to move her.

"Horace, I don't know," she said. "I don't know! I don't know! is all the explanation there is. I simply have left off loving. I am not a loving woman. I love people to love me, but I don't ever love in return. I think the fault is with the queer life I have had. My mother was a dancer, and my father was a singer, and because I was a very pretty baby they thought they loved me. But I'm sure they didn't. For when I was ill or in trouble it vexed them. I began to notice that when I was very, very tiny. They separated, and my father kept me. He was the better of the two. I think this biased me toward men-looking to them for real kindness whenever I was lonely and wanted it. He married again. For a time, this other mother was nice to me, too. Father left her, I think. Anyhow, he disappeared.

"I belonged to no one. I grew up

just any way luck turned. I went into department stores as a salesgirl. None of the women customers liked me, because I was flippant and pretty. But the men liked me for those very reasons. A department store is worse than . the stage for the terrible things that go on—or may go on. Why I kept straight I don't know. I can't say 'good, for I never was good. If I'd been good, I'd have gone to the bad long, long ago. There were enough to show me the way! And I found out in this second phase of life that to get any attention and care, I had to be bright, and laugh ing, and careless; that if I had a headache nobody cared, except to be annoyed about it. So I always shouted with the crowd, whether they shouted my politics or not. Demmy Duff used to buy wardrobe stuffs, and he took notice of me, and finally got me on the stage-another place where my real self had no business. So I lost my real self. It had never been any use to me. I worked hard, and I played hard, and I broke down.

"At your place I grew back to strength. You were so well and strong I kept thinking of you all the time. The realness of you seemed to reach out and touch me, and awaken me from the unreal world that I had built up around me. I had built it up for safety, I think, Horace; so that when things fell down I could say to myself: 'It wasn't real, anyway; so what's the difference if it does go?' But at Crooning Water there was no pretense."

"Not till you came."
"Not till I came. I began to pretend at once. Sometimes when I was lying in the hammock, I used to pretend that I had had a home when I was a little girl, and a mother who had combed my hair, and tied my shoestrings, and put my white apron on, and sent me to school, and taught me to sew, and to say prayers at night. Real things began to take on a prettiness to me. And then that night on the trail, in the dark, when you caught me to you, hard, and said, not gently, but with your teeth gritting, 'You have always been my girl!' the

dead ghost of my real self came back for a moment, and I loved you-as ghosts must always love, their time is so short-terribly, loved you terribly. I, too, thought it would last. But it has died—like the lilac, Horace, in a night. And I am not to blame any more than the lilac bush is to blame.'

His face, softened by comprehension, and tender with hope, was beautiful once more, and he spoke with his old

note of surety and triumph.

"But the lilacs will come again, Georgette. And so will this love of yours." "Wait till I tell you the worst."

"And that is?"

"Not only is the love gone, but I am glad that it is gone. It was painful to me. I was ashamed of it. My unreal world has grown to be the realest."

"But I can make the real one take its right place with you. Come with me, Georgette, and see. Leave these people who sing love songs, but have no love in their lives; leave them, take my hand, and live the song, too sweet ever to be sung where others can hear. Come down with me into some quiet valley, or warm earth, and true furrow, of planting, of harvest. My arms can do something else than just idly fold around you; they can coax a living for you from the honest, willing soil. Try it, my girl! Give me the chance to work for you, that you may rest."

"Rest!" The laughing devil came back to her beautiful eyes-slanting eyes, they were, full of a natural coquetry and smiling charm, "Rest! Don't you suppose I've seen the rest of a farmer's wife? The 'rest' of a farmer's wife begins at sunrise-or before, doesn't it?-and keeps on unremittingly till the pitch dark forces a cessation. I believe he lets her sleep only to save kerosene oil. To churn, to bake, to milk, to cook, to wash, to iron, to scrub, to sweep, to dust, to polish, to tend the pigs, to feed the chickens, to drag water to the calf, to dig potatoes—aren't these a few of the 'rests' you have planned out for me? Or are you generous enough to permit me to keep on 'working' on the "As my wife, you should be here," striking his heart. "Not on the stage."

"That's what I thought," she said calmly. "Which probably decided me against the honors of wifedom. Stop to think! True, I used only to earn sums varying from fifteen to forty dollars a week; but I now share the receipts, and get anywhere from five to eight hundred dollars a week. Does a man on a small farm get that much in cash in a year? In two? In three? And what proportion does his resting wife get? From the look of her clothes, a quarter a month, if she's good! Give a glance to this gown I have on. Soft, and raggy, and simple, isn't it? Just a and raggy, and simple, isn't it? morning slip, but I gave fifty-five dollars for it. If I waited for it till I'd saved up egg money, it would have come in handy for a shroud. My present job being light and remunerative, you'll have to think up something very special to induce me to try 'resting'!"

Her change to hardness had been so lightning swift that the effect of it was to daze him, and he let it pass over his head as if it were the ravings of some new rôle she was rehearsing. Yet the weight of it dragged him down to weari-

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"You were right about the revolver, Georgette," he confessed, in a tired way. "I bought it last night, intending to kill

myself, I think."

Suicide talk, of which she heard a great deal in her life, and of which she was skeptical, and properly so, never stirred any chord of mercy in her.

"Why didn't you, then?" she demand-

ed crisply.

"I grew afraid." The straightness of this reply startled her into a slight realization of what the night had been to him. "And I made up my mind that neither of us should leave the world without to-day's meeting. You have just asked me to think up something very special in the way of an inducement. Oh, girl—my girl! Is love nothing to you, then?"

"I told you my love was dead-and

that I was glad."

He rose, and came to her; but she was so apart from him in the spirit that

she never guessed what his move might mean until she found herself caught in his arms, and held close to him.

"Mine," he said gently, "mine! And I will hold you until you know it."

He brought the palm of her hand against his lips, and kissed it again and again. He laid his face to hers, and kissed her hair. And then he kissed her soft, panting mouth. The inert quietness of her, which he had seemed at first to take for consent, brought her release from his embrace. He let her go, saying beseechingly:

"Can you tell me now that your love is dead, and that you feel glad?"

She walked slowly across the room, her hands to her face, like a schoolgirl. When she turned to him, and took her hands laggingly away, her face was white and sick, as only loathing could make it.

"Feel?" she said furiously. And her tongue rushed unhesitatingly upon the most horrible words she could think of. "I feel exactly as if one of Henry Custard's bandages, soaked with horse liniment, had gone around me."

The revolver flashed in his hand. "You are worse than bad. You are cruel—and must die. You shall dupe no other man; shall break the heart of

no other woman."

Her brain received an impression of many things in the instant, like a picture that is taken by flashlight—her body on the floor, the line of red staining the rug, the papers in the evening-headlines: Actress Murdered by Frenzied Lover-more photographs, a funeral, flowers, a beautiful quartet sung by hungry singers, who would go to lunen at Winston's afterward, a new dress she had never even tried on-perhaps, disgusting thought, his dead body piled on top of hers—for he could hardly be fool enough to go tamely to his hanging. Pah! The whole sordid lack of necessity to the inevitable thing piled fury on top of fury. And she walked up to the gun. Had she stepped backward instead, nothing could have saved her life, man's unconquerable impulse being to kill the prey that flies.

"Pull the old trigger!" she raved con-

temptuously, not daring him, but granting him full permission. "Pull the old trigger! Do you suppose that I care so very much? But kindly wait a second till I say something to you that I never intended to say, not being a person who clases out, and shoves the blame on the other. Oh, you needn't hug onto your precious revolver-I'm not trying to get it. I don't want it. Nor am I trying to bluff you out of shooting. Shoot! A knife would have me cringing. Never could stand the idea of a cut. But I'd just as soon be shot as live. The world's none too delightful a place with a man like you on top of it.

"You say I duped you, and broke a woman's heart. I did neither the one nor the other. It was you yourself. Quite true, I flirted with you. But that one fact should have warned you. I myself, who can stand a lot of oddities, would have had my doubts of a girl who could hold a woman's child in her arms, and flirt over that child's head with the woman's husband. You were pleased to pieces with me because I was pretty, light-hearted, and willing to be made love to, and to make love.

"Why be amazed now that I keep the same? I am still pretty, still light-hearted, still willing to be made love to, still ready to make love—only I've changed men. That's what staggers you. I haven't changed. I'm just the same. What particularly charmed you was my lack of restraint. I still own it.

"You used to be interested in spite of vourself because I mimicked my friends. You became a friend. I added you to the mimicry. You knew all these things-that I was flippant, fast, a flirt, vain, cold, unscrupulous. Who, then, duped you? You! I told you to stay where you belonged. Who, then, broke a woman's heart? You! In your home you had faith, love, purity, truth, and loyalty. You put these beautiful things to cruel and wicked death, so as to make room for a person like me. And now it's my turn to be put to death, because I'm still me. Ah, get at it, and get through. You make me tired! Shoot!"

He looked curiously at the gun, as if wondering how it came in his hand. On the point of putting it back into his pocket, he wavered the act in his mind, and finally laid the weapon on the table, fitting it precisely to a certain spot, quite as attentively as if he felt it could not be comfortable anywhere else. He walked carefully over to the window, and pulled aside the curtain, in order to see the city clearly.

Her intense regard on him shifted slightly. She kept her glance nervously upon the revolver, expecting it to go off of itself—woman's general attitude of mind toward firearms. She was

deathly afraid of it by now.

Then suddenly Horace came to her, took her soft chin in his palm, and turned her serious face up to his, studying it line for line.

"My girl! Good-by."

Whether he actually said these words, or whether his eyes said them for him, or whether the mere sense of it spoke within her own heart, Georgette never could be quite sure. The silence in the room she remembered well, and for very long.

When he walked out of it, and left her, she knew he was gone out of her existence completely, for all time.

She jumped up with a breath of relief, and ran to the inner door, throwing it gladly open. In a farther room still were seen her friends playing cards.

"Where's Yes?" she called.

"Bored—skipped," said Brice. Georgette ran in, and flung herself

down at the table.

"Play a game with me," she begged, "to calm my mind. I'm nervous an l cranky. I've had a devil of a scene with an idiot. Cut!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Georgette, in summer garb, was pretty; but in silver fox, was beautiful. In winter Georgette could number her victims by the hundreds, instead of by the tens of summer.

"And since John Congdon hasn't been near me for weeks, he probably thinks he's cast me off forever, so I'd better go see him, and get him out of the notion," was the conclusion she finally came to.

She found him in his office. And it was empty, except for himself.

"Business must be slack," she said, looking around. "Or else you've killed them all off."

She dropped radiantly into the consulting chair. He pushed back his own, and contemplated her keenly. Disquiet clouded his glance.

"Miss Verlaine, I hope you are not

ill again."

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"Miss Verlaine! You mustn't call me that. It shows you are angry. What have I done?"

"As usual-nothing."

"Ah, it is as I thought! You are still maintaining that I should have done that-that impossible thing." Which was the way she referred to her broken compact with Horace.

"No-not now."

Not now! And exactly what did he mean by that?

By keeping silent, she would find out. So she kept silent.

"What became of him?" asked Cong-

"I don't know," she said coolly. "But you do. I didn't come to talk of Horace Dornblazer, though."

"But you came to have me talk of him. So I will. I sent him back to Crooning Water."

Her unfeigned amazement was beyoud concealment.

"Why, he wouldn't do that!" she cried, her scorn of the action burning the words.

"He's a better man than you think him.

"Gone back like a whipped dog?"

"A whipped dog may be a brave one. And a brave dog only needs one whipping. A cur has to be kicked around all the time. I told Horace that the least thing he could do was to go back and ask Rache if she could make any use of him."

"Use?"

"Yes. A woman needs a man on a farm. I pointed out to Horace that she

would have to hire some one. So I asked him if it wouldn't be only decent of him to find out if she wanted him to stay till she got suited. He finally caught the drift of the thing. A worse man than Horace would have thought so much of his own pride that he wouldn't have gone. But Horace looked at Rache's side. Rather late, of course -but he went.'

"Ray wouldn't take him back. She's

too good!"

"I was afraid of that, too. But a really good woman knows how to let up on her goodness. A halfway one doesn't."

"Ray took him back!"

Congdon leaned to his desk, and hunted industriously in pigeonholes for two letters. These he dusted with extreme and thoughtful pains, his eye dubiously on his visitor, to whom he eventually confided:

"He wrote and told me all about it. I asked him to, for I wanted to know. I didn't ask her-for the same reason. And she wrote, too. I have hold of the whole story. Do you want to hear

For once she gave a simple and subdued answer.

"Yes-if I have the right."

"Your scruples are six months late." He spoke practically and surgically, opening the two letters, and spreading them comparingly, side by side, on the desk.

Having decided upon a beginning point, Congdon covered both letters with a ready hand, and started in to talk. Like most people of few words, he could occasionally turn on an astonishing stream of them. This was one of the times. Plainly, he had so dwelt upon the scene pictured in the two letters that he seemed to see it, rather than reflect it, as he spoke.

"Horace got down there in the evening, after dark had fallen. Winter strikes Crooning Water long before we have it here. He speaks of the mulberry leaves rustling under his feet. Horace is, unfortunately, a bit of a poet, and nonessentials, if they are pretty enough, hit him hard. Rache told

me nothing about the fallen mulberry leaves, or the rustle of them in the dark."

Georgette settled back in her seat. She knew why Horace had mentioned the mulberry trees. At the move he waited, as if expecting her to speak. But she had nothing to say. So he went

"On the porch—and it was too cold for her there, and too lonely—was Rache, her head leaning against the dead honeysuckle vine. And Rache is no leaner—you know that. Nor is she a person who's much alone, mostly having a child by her side, or an animal at her feet, or some one around upon whom she's waiting."

A quick picture of Rachel—coming over the warm grass—a glass of milk in her shapely, white hand—bringing it to the hammock—Georgette stirred rest-

lessly.

Congdon saw, and seemed to know

why.

"Yes," he said, as if in answer to a speech, "it looked like a broken heart, did it not? Rache, in the dark and the wind, her soft-brown head lying on the dead branches, from which the leaves and the sweet-smelling white flowers had fallen. At his step, she jumped up. He spoke to her. He asked her not to be startled, or frightened. And she asked him, in return, why she should be startled or frightened at the coming of her husband."

Congdon stopped to think this over

for himself, saying reflectively, at last:
"Her 'husband!" Rache would be a hard woman to get divorced from, you see. Even if Horace had kept up the desertion, and sent her the papers, I don't think they would have divorced her any. To explain her idiosyncrasy, she says in her letter that a man who is the father of a woman's children has to be that woman's husband, with or without papers. If she's right, and I think she is, there are a lot of unmarried wives around. But that's their business, I guess-not mine. Horace told her that I had sent him back to say that the woman for whom he had betrayed her had, in turn, betrayed him."

As he might have stopped in the middle of an operation, to see if his patient was sufficiently chloroformed to stand it, so he now stopped considerately, and peered into the depths of the consulting chair. Satisfied, he went on:

"Horace said the rest of what I told him to say—asked her to use him if she wanted to use him, like a harrow, or a drag, even if she propped him up in the barns nights after getting through with him. Well, he gave her the chance; but she wouldn't take it."

"She couldn't-I knew it!" broke in

Georgette involuntarily.

"No, she couldn't. You remember that porch? By the old honeysuckle vine? It's up two low, long steps from the ground. Horace was at the foot of these—the earth was all the home he had—talking up to her when he gave her the chance to punish him—that's the chance she wouldn't take, couldn't take. For when she heard that he had been cast out like herself, she put down her hand—and drew him up the two steps—till he stood on the level—beside her—his wife. That's Rache!"

Congdon consulted one of the letters, found a place in it, creased the rest from sight, and deliberately handed the

passage to Georgette.

In Rachel's square, graceless handwriting—black, and plain as print— Georgette read:

The children were upstairs asleep, doctor, and how could I have borne to look at them the next morning if I had sent their father away in the night from his own home? The first fault had not been mine, and it was now coming to its own end; but the second fault would have been mine, and nothing could have mended it again. It is a strange thing, doctor, but I can't bring myself to hate Miss Verlaine as I would have hated her if she had made Horry happy, though this would have been good of her; but as she was wicked enough to be unkind to him, I can try to forget.

But I ought not to say wicked, for there is nothing wicked to her any more than there is to a nettle in a lane which has to sting people whether it wants to or not, just because God made it that way, and put it there. We can only wonder why, and keep away from it. The children love her, and miss her, and talk of her all the time. I used to think she loved them, too; but now I think she only played with them as if they had been

kittens that she would have sent away to be drowned if she got over being amused with

them.

But I must not think of it any more. I must forget. People may fancy it is easy for me to do the right thing, but it is not; it is very hard, but somehow I do not dare keep cross with Horry, any more than I dare keep on being cross with the children when they have been bad. For though I want them to be good, yet I want them to love me, too, and I have found out that when I am at my wit's ends and do not know what to do, that the only thing to do is to be forgiving.

"She can't write the word, you see," said Congdon, taking back the letter, and reading the last sentence. "She can't write forgiving correctly, but she can do it! That will send her to the head in God's big spelling match, I think. Whole droves of folks who can spell eleemosynary have never disbursed a charitable cent."

Georgette was thinking of the other letter. Congdon frowned slightly as he ran over the fine and flowing handwriting. But he refused to hand it to her. He shoved both letters far back into

their pigeonholes.

"After all," he said sharply, "I shall not tell you of the words which passed between them. I intended to wring your heart. But you have no heart."

"My flat is so small," she murmured

excusingly.

He ripped Horace's letter again into view.

"Listen!" he said harshly. And then he read:

"Perhaps the only thing that is left for me to do is to work for her. Were you right, Congdon, in thinking a man can ever goback? For a short while I thought that perhaps you were, because she took my hand, and drew me into the house, and we went together and kissed the sleeping babies, and Rache told me that for their sakes things were to be just the same between us. And then we went downstairs where the lamp was lit, and we sat down, and we tried to be natural. Tried! And at last we were silent. We have been silent before. But it was not like this. She felt it, too. And she came to me, and she knelt beside me—Rache, on her knees to me!—and she hid her face in my hands, weeping, and said: 'Be good to me, be good to me, for I see that things can never be the same again!"

He stood up roughly, and ran his hand disarrangingly through his hair.

"And that's where we have to leave them," he said. "Housed together, with the winter problem before them of how possibly to stand things that are the same, yet never the same again."

She stood up, too.

"Isn't that your problem? And mine? And everybody's? Isn't it life?"

"Perhaps," he conceded curtly. "And now let us talk of something else. For one thing, I am not satisfied with the look of you."

"An old complaint of yours."

"You are working hard, I know. But that is not dangerous. And you are playing hard. But that is not dangerous. To make play of your work, though, and work of your play, is going to pull down your system."

"Why haven't you been to see

me?"

"Does that mean you do not wish to talk about yourself? All right! But remember this: When you do wish it, and do wish help, that I am here, as I have always been—ready."

"It is queer that you are good to me," she said restively, "yet hate me

so.

"I do not hate you."

"I half want to ask you something."
"Wholly want it."

"But am afraid you'll laugh at me."
"Have I ever laughed at you—even

when you have been funny?"

There was no sarcasm in his voice. His words were true. He had never laughed at her, whether in mockery, amusement, or lightness. And that was the secret of her fondness for him. So many people had laughed!

The steadfastness of him wrung the

words from her:

"John Congdon, I wish you cared for me!"

"I care for you."

He was staring quietly at her from over his folded arms.

"You telegraph post! I mean liked me!"

"I like you."

"Well, loved me, then!"

"I love you."

"Oh!" with an impatient stamp of

the foot. "Why do you densely make me say it out? I mean I wish you had loved me—as a man—loves a woman."

"I love you as a man loves a wom-

an."

He enunciated the words with perfect clearness and precision, and they filled the bottle-lined office like an important prescription about which there must be no mistake.

She made a timid step toward him,

asking brokenly:

"Then, why? Then, why-"

"Why have I never let myself say it before?"

"Yes."

"Because I knew all along that I was loving something that was not good."

"Oh!" She gave the cry hoarsely, as a brave man might cry out under un-

bearable pain.

"Come here," he said. She leaned against him, hurt and suffering; and he held her protectingly—championing her—under his own insult. "I could have risked it for myself," he explained, as carefully as a professor to a class, "but I had those dream children to think about, too, Georgette—the ones that you told me would be cheaper to keep in dreamland."

She moved rebelliously, saying: "You've a fine memory for things to

forget."

"I remember every word you ever said to me, Georgette."

"Choice collection!"

"You said I would kiss you sooner or later."

"Did I?" wearily. "Evidently, I fibbed."

"Georgette!"
"Yes?"

"Shall it be now?"

She paused, thinking, and suddenly seemed to remember something on the side, but of weight. Briskly she shook herself free, and went over to her wrappings, putting them carefully on, while she said, quite carelessly:

"No-I think not."

"Why?"

"Well, on the play bills I'm Verlaine; but in the obituary column I'll be Smith." "And that means?"

"A few days ago I married Yes."

"Oh, God! Georgette, no!"

"Yes-Yes. Sort out his name. It's in there."

"Poor little girl! Poor little girl!"

"Me?"
"You!"

"Not poor—rich! Rich as Cricky, if that's the gentleman. It'll wear me out trying to spend it all. Perhaps I won't get the chance, though."

"What made you marry—what could make you marry a man like that?"

"Absence of mind—total absence! Awful affliction, doctor."

"What made you?"

"Well, for one thing, he asked me, not being afraid of risks; he's in the business."

"Oh!" Her cry of a moment ago was now his. Their account was clear. She had given him knife for knife.

She started to go.

"Please wait a moment," he said, pulling himself sharply back into professionalism.

Sitting down, he wrote out a frowning, thoughtful prescription, which he

finally handed to her.

She took it, and looked at it studiously, shaking her head over its Latinisms and pharmaceutic symbols.

"Matrimonial antidote?" she asked.
"I want you to have it made up.
Take it regularly. You are heading straight for where you were before."

"Then I won't take a transfer," she remarked. And she tore the prescription to shreds, and sprinkled them in the wastebasket. "That reminds me of what I wanted to ask you."

"Ask it."

"A girl who is dead is neither good nor bad, is she? She's just only dead. Could you kiss a dead girl?"

"I?"
"Yes."

"No!"

"But I want you to, John—please!"
"Want me to kiss a dead girl?
Whom?"

"Me—when I am dead. This sounds as if I were playing to get sniffles from

the gallery, but I'm not, John-honest! And maybe I won't die a bit. Who knows? It would be just like me not to. Still, you said if I went the pace I'd surely croak. So it's the pace for mine!"

"Stop talking wickedly."

"How else do I ever talk? It's the way I'm made. When I was born a marionette, and wound up to go, the angel behind the counter wound me up too tight. I'll be quiet enough dead. And I'll be very lonely in my coffin, John. I won't be married long. You know it. Yes will fade away forever into France, and it won't be so many weeks, either. I'll be very lonely in my coffin, for there isn't anybody who really, really cares for me-after I'm not able to act, and cut up, and make fun-only you, John Congdon! And I want to feel less lonely about it, and would, if you'll promise to come and give me the kiss 'later,' John. I'll be in an undertaker's back room, very likely, for landladies don't like stiffs around. I'll be all by myself. There'll be plenty of flowers on me-the boys and girls will see to that-but there

won't be anybody to feel the right way about a dead person—only you. So I want you to promise to come there and give me a last kiss, your first-not a lover's one; just a 'Good-by, Georgette, good-by.' They can screw the lid down then, and send me along. 'Push it along! Send it along! Shove it right along to father!"

She sang the rowdy minstrel refrain with rhythmic vim and shoveling gesture-for the moment a rolling-eyed

darky.

"Oh, hush, Georgette-hush, hush!" "Will you promise, John?" "I-I want you to take care of yourself."

"But you know I won't. Will you promise, John?"

"I will—come. Believe me!"
"I do! Well, I guess I'll go now.

What did I visit you for, anyhow? Oh, yes—to tell you I was married. Well, I told you."

"You told me."

"And, John-" She stood in his doorway, brightly waving him farewell. "Georgette?"

"Tell Horace."



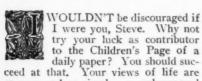
THRIFT

AFTER the waltz, in a darkened nook. You stood with her in the scented gloom, And was it a word, a touch, or a look Or was it the musk of the orchid's bloom, That made you forget? But forget you did, And the strangest part—she didn't forbid!

You had met her only an hour before, But what is time to a heart aflame? You kissed her-you took no account of the score, And the dusk enveloped her look of shame-If there were such a look; and, strange to say, She never attempted to say you nay.

You weren't for her, and she wasn't for you, And you knew it then, as you know it now: But Love doesn't wait to collect its due, But takes its toll as it goes, somehow, For Love has a wonderful, thrifty way, And knows but a single date—to-day! WILL LISENBEE.





ceed at that. Your views of life are so rosy and so simple—so unhampered by facts. I can see you telling beautifully, and quite sincerely, how mother forgave little Willie for having inadvertently drowned the baby in the lagoon, as soon as Willie explained to her that it had not been a 'premeditated affair,' and that she should not 'feel hurt,' because he himself 'attached no

importance' to it.' This had been Alice Elizabeth Ogden's parting shot on that spring day, a year ago, when she had left Stephen Ogden's home, and told him that she would never enter it again. Rather, it had been one of her parting shots. She had fired many; wild shots, all wide of the mark-Steve was as convinced of that now as when she fired them-yet each leaving a wound which, though unnoted at the time, later uncovered itself through pain, and revealed the fact that, however wild Alice's shooting might have been, portions of his mental anatomy had been penetrated.

The year's circle had melted into another spring. April was dawning. The skies were an elfin of late snow flurries, warm winds, suns, and showers, and the earth wore the rare, strange

beauty of her brief hour of hidden promise. All the world above, beneath, and around argued of hopes suddenly to bud and flower. Steve Ogden went about his work darkly, with a dull, insistent ache in him which daily dug its way deeper. Alice was making plans for a separation, so her mother had informed him in a letter received that morning, which frankly spelled terms which that nice-tongued lady would never have permitted human ears to hear her utter. He was irrevocably condemned. And for what? For a sudden silly affair and a sudden silly woman, neither of which weighed one straw's weight in his life.

On this particular spring day, with its promiseful airs, its tang and its balm, the deep, full ache in Steve Ogden's heart gnawed so vitally that he closed his desk, and started out from town to walk himself footsore as an antidote. Yet he was in search of something besides blisters. He wanted elucidation, the response to his half-consciously reiterated: "What's the answer?"

He craved that which would give to his pain surcease; and he had begun to perceive, though very dimly, that the answer must be mental. It must lie in some property of understanding, and he must acquire a penetrative method of thought which would enable him to expand into that degree of understanding which cancels pain by laying bare its

hidden causes. Introspection promised to be a difficult and scarifying process to Steve Ogden, who was the average, normal masculine; that is, vigorous, spontaneous, actional, with a sound physique and sapful will that demand doing. It promised to be difficult, but he had committed himself to the task.

He was not only hurt by his wife's stand in the matter; he was bitterly angry. He felt that Alice had treated him with almost malevolent injustice. Next to the ugly fact that she could leave him, it was the injustice of her action that most wounded. He was willing to admit, and he had admitted, that he had done wrong. Certainly when the discovery of his "slip" could cause suffering enough to blanch Alice's laughing lips, it must be worse than a slip; it must be a sin.

In that moment, seeing the stricken white of her face, he knew that "slips" were taboo with him for the rest of his life. Yet he had marveled vaguely, even in the midst of his great distress and contrition, how his little, amorous accident, which had meant nothing at all to him, could possibly wound Alice almost to her destruction. He had expressed his regret by every term in his rather limited vocabulary. He had begged to be told what he could do to make up for having "hurt" her.

"I think," she had said wanly, "perhaps that is why you never can make up for having hurt me—because you don't see that that is the least of it."

"The least of it?" he had echoed, mystified. "Why—why—it's all of it, isn't it?"

"Oh, no. Oh, Steve, can't you see it is nothing, compared to the fact that you could do it at all?"

"Do what? You mean—her? Why, I've told you how that happened. There wasn't anything to that. Great guns, Alice! You don't think I cared anything about that woman, do you?"

"I think it would be a thousand times better if you had cared for her. Then it would have been, at least, human and natural; and that would have made it decent, in a way."

"Alice! Are you crazy? How could

it possibly be human and natural for me to love another woman when I'm married to you? And how would it be decent to love two women at the same time, even supposing any man could do it? Which I maintain he can't."

Steve's tenses were never reliable, under excitement.

"You can't see that—oh, no! Yet you can be untrue to me."

"I am not untrue to you, Alice!" indignantly. "I have never been untrue to you."

"Steve! How can you dare to say that?"

"Because it's so. I know more about this affair than you do. In fact, I'm the only one who really does know all about it; and I know that the very worst part of it is that you should hear of it, and be hurt by it. That makes me want to kick myself from here to Cincinnati—and you know how I don't love to go to Cincinnati, even when I ride there in a stuffed car seat! But, as to these things proving that I don't love you, or that I'm untrue to you, that's all rot. As I see it, they don't come where you are."

"I'd like to know what you do consider being untrue, if this is not?"

"Why, when a man doesn't take care of his wife, I should say. When he stops loving her, and wants to marry some other woman who has caught his fancy—a man who breaks up his home. A man is true if he loves his wife the best he knows how; if he gives her all he has, protects her, thinks and plans for her happiness and welfare, and is patient with all her moods, and her 'nerves,' as women like to call their little tantrums, and doesn't interfere with her, or dictate to her, except when he sees her laying up trouble for herself. But this other thing-women are always away off on that subject-especially good women. They don't know anything about a man's life, or how he looks at these things. They think it is just the same with him after marriage as it is with them. I suppose because they know it was so different before marriage! That's contradictory enough

to be a good woman's reason! You know perfectly well that everybody takes it for granted what sort of a life an unmarried man leads; and no mother hesitates to consent to his marrying her daughter because of it. He's under no condemnation for it. It's accepted."

"That has nothing to do with us now." "Yes, it has. It's got everything to do with it. But do you look at any unmarried woman's life in the same way? Do you take it for granted she lives like a man? Not much! And if you did, you'd put her down under such a heap of condemnation she never could get out. For her, it's the unpar-donable sin. Then when a woman's married, if she is unfaithful to her husband in that way, you don't condemn her half so much as you do the unmarried woman who goes wrong. But let a married man slip up-you turn on him as if he was a virgin who had lost her ideals. It's a damned injustice! It's damned rot! There's no sense to it. If those affairs have meant next to nothing to him all his bachelor days, it gets me how you figure out that they mean so much to him after he's married, when every rule of common sense ought to tell you they must mean less." "If the tables were turned, and I had

"Please don't spring that one, Alice. It has nothing to do with the question. You are clear outside of this. It never

can be the same."

done-

"Why not?" mutinously.

"Because—it offends me to use you in this argument, but if you will have it so—because, if it was you, you would believe you had committed the unpardonable sin. Whereas, I know I haven't. You'd practically condemn yourself to death for it. I don't condemn myself at all for the thing itself. What I'm so sore about is that through an unpremeditated, silly, useless, unimportant action of mine you have suffered. It doesn't matter to me whether the act itself is right or wrong. If it hurts you, it is evil."

Her lip curled bitterly.

"You might have thought of that before." "I should have," he admitted; "but I didn't. That is where my error commenced, and I'd give ten years of my life to undo it. At least, I will give all the years that are coming to me to make up for having brought so much pain to you."

"You can't make up for it, Steve,"

she answered dully.

"Yes, I can. I've got to! Things have got to be the way they always were with us."

"Oh, how utterly impossible that is!"
"Impossible? Why? What do you

mean, Alice?"

"Things can never be the same again with us. You don't understand any-

thing about it, Steve."

"Look here, dear," he broke in. "Do you want me to say I've committed a moral offense? I can't see it that way —I mean, apart from its hurting you. But suppose I admit, for argument's sake, that I've committed an offense against morality. Where does that bring us to? How does it help us? Do you think it gives you the right to judge me, if my offense is not against you, but against morality? Can you put me under condemnation for it? By what right?"

"Oh, no, Steve; that is not it, at

all."

"That's partly it, I'll swear! Because that's a woman's way. She claims to make a personal offense wholly impersonal, but what she really does is to claim that what doesn't jibe with her ideas is an offense against principle; then she takes to herself the deific prerogative of infallible judgment, and uses it to condemn in accord with her personal viewpoints. That is what you are trying to do to me, Alice; and I won't stand for it. It isn't square!"

It was then—when, to his mind, the discussion was really over, and the quarrel made up—that Alice began firing those wild, wide-of-the-mark shots,

"Steve, it is hopeless. I don't understand how a man can be a lover and a husband, and yet know—oh, just nothing. I am not condemning you for a moral offense. I don't care what the social code says about it. I acknowledge

all you say about the different upbringing and habits of men and women. I know you are deeply sorry to have hurt me. I believe you would never run the risk of hurting me in that way again.

"But none of that touches the real point at all. You say the thing itself is nothing, apart from its hurting me. You call it a 'slip.' And I suppose that is how men regard it; and it explains why there is so much heartache and sin from it—because men forget that it is the life force itself which they are misusing so contemptuously. The only evil is to profane what is pure. Oh, if you love me, how is it you do not under-Love—the vital love that has been between us two-should teach you that the union of two bodies must be inviolate, because the all of life-or death—is in the passion which joins them. It has been life to me-life!

"Oh, a woman, to her husband, is like the earth in spring-at his caress every thought buds feeling, creative life pervades her; life put forth by love, born of love, for it can be born no other way. And you talk of 'affairs' and 'ships.' You dare to say that these 'affairs' make no difference! You dare to say that when once love has come to two persons and joined them, when love has been born in the flesh, and has put on her body of passion, that her body can be carried hither and you without her? Yes! That is true; for a dead body can be carried to burial when the living spirit is gone out of it!"

"Alice!" he cried, alarmed. "You're raving! You're ill. It's awful to hear you talk like that! I don't know what it means."

"No, I suppose not. But I know. Perhaps if I had broken faith you would understand, because you'd feel—as I am feeling. You'd find that passion profaned is love slain, because they can never be separate, once they have been joined in one's life. Separation is death. Death in some form is inevitable when creative force, that joins life and love in one, is profaned. If I were a woman of the slums, I would follow out the impulse that seizes me—yes, now, while I look at you, and think of

what you have done—and I would shoot you; shoot till my gun was empty!"

"Alice! Alice!"

"Jealousy, they call such murders. Jealousy! It is love life, profaned, dealing death, through some poor, ignorant being, who can only feel, and cannot reason. I can reason, so I shall not do murder because you have profaned the great vital thing which bound us, the thing that was you and me made one, and distorted the love life in me into a lust for death. I shall only go away. It is all over. God knows, I wish I were a slum woman, and so could blindly, darkly make an end of both of us! Only I'm not; and I question: Would it be the end?"

Of course, Steve knew, from newspaper-headline reading, that men and women murder each other, and divorce each other, daily in this large, pleasant, free land, because of alleged or proven infidelities. But he had taken it for granted—if he had contemplated the fact at all—that half of them were insane or intoxicated, or both, and the others desperate with jealousy of successful rivals, and with the misery of finding themselves supplanted in the affections of those they loved.

But Alice had no such excuse for her extreme and sanguinary feeling toward him. She was not intoxicated, she was not insane; at least, she had never seemed mad until that morning; and the bare notion that she might be jealous, or believe that his love had wandered whither his senses had momentarily strayed, was too utterly absurd to be entertained. She was the apple of his eye, his pivot of life, his other self; and she knew that she possessed his heart entirely.

What was the reason that they could not find a meeting ground on which to dispose of this error, when he was willing, anxious, to do all a man could in compensation to her for those wounded hours? Some wild notion of hers about love life profaned bringing death! That was too deep for him. He wanted to make up, to buy her the handsomest ring he could find in Chicago, as a peace offering, to send her out the freshest

and most fragrant violets to wear, and to take her downtown to the daintiest dinner, and the best theater in town. She would none of it, and none of him. Her answer had been a suggestion that he write tales for the Children's Page!

At last, when, out of his pain and bitter sense of injustice, he had reproached her for lack of love, and for framing new, strange laws, of which no man ever heard before, to govern and condemn him, she had replied, in sub-

stance:

"I am not making this law. I am only finding out about it because you have thrust me into conflict with it. I did not know anything about it till now. You have done something 'not evil in itself,' but which 'hurts' me, you say, But what is it I feel and see taking place in me because of your act? You have done something which tears me to shreds. It seizes on the vital, living, creative thing in me that made me a wife-your wife-and disintegrates it and me. It makes me experience feelings and thoughts I never knew existed. Could I feel so unless some terrible thing had been done to me? Unless some mighty law had been transgressed, and I, too, was enveloped in the pen-If you cannot understand me now, then I've never been more than an 'affair' to you! Perhaps that is why you do not see that you have subverted the law by which love lives and creates. So you have turned our living, tangible love into a destructive, death-dealing thing.

Steven Ogden knew, by rote, Alice's every word spoken during those few hideous days ere she left him. She was convinced of everything she said, he

could see.

"You have done something which seizes on the vital, living, creative thing in me that made me a wife-your wife -and disintegrates it and me." "Disintegrates" seemed to Steve an alarmingly correct term. Alice's eves and skin were dulled, her face looked seared, her firm, beautifully molded lips-so opulent in caresses, so spontaneous and rich with new love lore in every em-

brace-were lax and shaking. Just the man in Steve Ogden rose up above all hurts, and longed to lift this stricken woman, and encompass her with protection and care. But that was denied

Until the moment of her farewell, Steve felt that her going was wrong, because it was unjust to him, an agony of punishment altogether disproportionate to his offense; but when he really saw her departing, he knew suddenly that her going was wrong, because of something bigger and different, which he did not comprehend, but felt: something which told him that however venial his offense against the law which was punishing them both, she was now committing the greater offense.

She had gone to the home of her mother-a Madam Busy, who had always disliked her son-in-law on principle, and who did not take off her hat for three days after her daughter's return, at the end of which time her corner of Highland Park was well provided

with conversation,

Alice must come back, Steve told himself every day; she must. He missed her terribly. He wanted her there to tell things to; to confide in her his day's doings; to make plans with her. He missed her counsel, her criticism, her "hunches," as he called her lightning intuitions which read motive and character in a glance or a repeated word. He needed the woman comrade, the intelligent wife, made keen by love to see his greatest good, and strong to battle for it. He craved the soothing touch of her spirit, when he, wearied and heavybrained earthman, came home to her from the day's conflict.

Surely, he thought, there was never another woman who permeated a life and home as Alice pervaded his. She was herself like spring, he thought; so changeable of mood, with splashes of rain across her sunniest days, and outbursts of song in her darkest days, murmurs of tenderness, sparkles of fun, shocks of passion, and white winds of spirit-and through all these, as with spring, steady growth to flowering and

unfoldment.

He longed to hear her sing again, quaint songs of her own making, to the perfect piano it had been his joy to give her. He wanted to see her, with inky forefinger and sparkling eyes, poring over scraps of verse and prose of her own writing. He loved her writings; they revealed to him new facets of her. How was it that Alice, who knew so much—Alice, so brilliant, and wise, and complete—could think it right to break up their home, and to condemn him irrevocably—for nothing? She must come back!

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On this fresh April day, a year after her departure, there had arrived the venomous note from her mother. Alice was not coming back. She was going to law to get rid of him. Some sort of a separation it must be, he argued. It could not be a divorce; it must not be a divorce. Something definite must be done at once. But what?

"What's the answer?" he demanded of himself. "There's got to be an answer. I'm going to find it."

He may have had a half-formed idea of trying to see Alice, for he struck out along the north shore. From Lake Street to Lincoln Park, from Lincoln Park to Edgewater, and from Edgewater to Wilmette, Steve went over every line and word of their parting scene, and ever he came to the same impasse, which was Alice's inexplicable theory about "love life profaned," and "disintegration," and "subverting the law by which love lives and creates, and so turning it into a destructive, death-dealing thing." Why—Alice had wanted to shoot him!

It seemed to Steve unnecessary to add famine to his other pangs, so he turned in at Ravinia Park, and made for the inn. The clerk informed him that they were not serving meals yet—not till May. Steve mutely pointed to the long table heaped with smeared porcelain. The clerk explained that the dinner had been a special order for a party of motorists, who had brought their chickens and what nots with them, and who were even now frolicking sedately on the green, preparatory to motoring home again.

Forceful arguments, with bribes, at last induced the clerk to order the untouched remainder of the picnickers' supplies cooked for Steve.

He was bleaching some chicken bones and listening to the humorous tooting of departing machines when he heard his name spoken, in his mother-in-law's voice, almost at his elbow. She was on the veranda, just outside the window nearest his table, with her dearest crony, Mrs. Withering. The two women were shaking out their cloaks, patting each other's plaits, and adjusting each other's

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Withering; there is nothing for it now but absolute divorce. Unless Steve Ogden is taken out of my darling's life definitely, once and for all, I see no chance of happiness for her. While she was living with him, I made the best of it, of course. But now that we have—I mean, now that she has—determined to divorce him, I see no reason for my excusing him. Steve Ogden never was worthy of Alice—never! I did my best, but she would marry him. I was reminding her of that only this morning, and she had nothing to say."

"Don't you think she seems interested in Mr. Martindale?"

"I hope so. I suppose there are persons who would be shocked to hear me say that, when Alice is not even divorced yet; but I have alway been a broad-minded woman, Mrs. Withering, and it is too late for me to change now. Mr. Martindale is a charming man—a lovely family. Ogden had no family, you know; entirely self-made. Mr. Martindale has such exquisite manners toward older women, almost flattering, but so sincere. Then, of course, he is extremely well off, and so musical-oh, very musical, and that means so much in a man, especially to Alice's artistic nature. Fortunately she is with me, so no one can have any excuse for gossip.

Are you ready now, Mrs. Withering?"
"Yes, I think so, I wonder if Mrs.
Ogden and Mr. Martindale have returned yet from their walk?"

"Oh, no matter. They will probably come later, in any case. Alice said that

she meant to stay out till moonrise. She is so romantic about nature, dear child. Oh, there they are! Well, children, are you coming home with us? Did you

have a nice walk?"

"Such a charming walk, Mrs. Benton, that it has given us a new appetite. So Mrs. Ogden and I are going to have a dish of salad and starshine before we come home."

The suave tones, not known to Steve, evidently proceeded from the throat of

the musical Mr. Martindale.

"Salad and starshine! How romantic! But, Alice, my love, you must have my shawl. It is growing chilly. It is in the motor. If Mr. Martindale will kindly—"

"We'll both come, mamma."

Their voices died away as they de-

scended into the park.

Steve Ogden sat as still as a bronze Buddha. During those few moments he could not have moved had his life depended on it. Though outwardly still, paralyzed, as it were, he was inwardly in a state of upheaval that had no parallel in all his life's experience. He was not thinking; he was seeing thoughts and fragments of thoughts come out of the black turmoil, and outline themselves against a background of chaos, like scrappy chalk markings on a gigantic blackboard. He sat still, and stared at them, while they called themselves his thoughts; but vaguely, yet positively, Steve Ogden knew that they were not his thoughts; first, because he was not thinking, could not think; secondly, because they were not human thoughts.

All he had ever been, or believed himself to be, as a man was crumbling to pieces. He saw a Thing creep out from the midst of the disintegrated human temple which had been Steve Ogden—Steve Ogden, sane, cool, dependable product of modern civilization—and the creeping Thing had a jungle look; it smelled of the caves when earth was

newly made.

"Mrs. Ogden and Mr. Martindale." That sounded well! "Mrs. Ogden and Mr. Martindale." His wife and another man. Another man and Alice. "Mr. Martindale is very musical." Musical! What in hell had that to do with it? Divorce! His wife and another man.

He heard the two take their places at the table in the veranda nook outside his

window.

"I'll go in and give special orders about that starshine salad," Martindale said, "And if you don't mind sitting alone for a few moments, Mrs. Alice, I'll fix some creamed chicken as, believe me, only I in all the world know how. And I'll make the only salad dressing in the world, too, while I am out there. This supper is to be a midsum-

mer night's dream!"

Steve saw a slender, dark little man pass through the café to the kitchen. She was alone there almost within reach of his hand. The smug, familied, musical thing had left her for a few moments. "Mrs. Alice!" "Mrs. Alice" was alone while her swain creamed chicken for her. Chicken? Why, he, Steve, had eaten all their chicken! What? It was that rotter's chicken he had bought from the chef, and eaten? He wished he had perished of hunger first. It choked him.

He seized the plate, heaped with bones, and flung it mightily the whole length of the room, and out of the open door. Divorce! To marry again! His wife, flesh of his flesh, surrendered to him first, only and wholly fused with him in the fires of the heart's first spring; his—his—his—if there were any truth in earth, if spring's mating calls were aught but lyrical lies; his, if there were holy touch and hallowed thought in wifehood or in wiving, and if all the love-born life and birth-giving passion of earth were not wantonry!

Another husband for his wife. A musical Mr. Martindale intrudes. And Alice Ogden's own mother is content that Alice Ogden should become a thing unnamable. No! Better a thousand

times-

He started blindly for the door—and her. Almost ere he had moved, he seemed to hear clearly, as if she were really speaking, the words again:

"You have done something which tears me to shreds. It seizes on the

vital, living, creative thing in me that made me a wife, and disintegrates it and me. You have turned our love life into a destructive, death-dealing thing."

The sentences rang in his ears, knelled at him, clanged on his heart, beset, and possessed him. For the moment, he was staggered. The sudden recognition that it was his own deed of a year and half ago, his "slip," that he was facing now in all its accumulated consequences, overwhelmed him. Now he knew what Alice had meant. The law! He, too, had discovered it!

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Manlike, Steve's brain cleared magically the moment it grasped one definite idea to which the whole man could respond in action. He overleaped every lesser issue, every complex phase, to the main conclusion, and saw that the separation, her leaving him, the Martindale intrusion, were all as distorted and as wrong as his "slip," which had brought them about; they were part of the act of lawbreaking, not merely its penalty.

Alice's lips went white and dumb when she saw him standing by her table. She stared at him with wide, hurt eyes, in which hope began to gleam pitifully at last, meeting his, which spoke love undisguised.

"Alice," he asked, quite calmly, "is that your car there—or his?"

This was a new Steve to Alice—a Steve whom the Eden woman in her answered instinctively, before thought could rise and question.

"It is ours. I mean—it's the Clipper."

"'Ours' is right. You are coming home with me in it now."

"Steve!"

"He can find his way back on the interurban. You can leave a message for him, if you like; or I'll go and tell him. But you can't travel round with him any more—or with any man but me."

She made several efforts to speak; and at last managed to say:

"I've—I've decided on—divorce. You know what you've done—and I——"
She paused helplessly. She felt her-

self waking anew, and the force of Steve, this new-old Steve. She comprehended nothing, but she knew that she was secretly going out to him, asking him for the answer, even as he had asked it of the waking earth that spring day.

"Have you stopped loving me? Can

self caught between two forces, both

relentless-the force of her own past

"Have you stopped loving me? Can you stop loving me?" he asked, and laid his strong, quiet hand on hers, which were clasped and trembling. Again she tried to speak in terms of pride and rebuke, and failed.

"No," she whispered. "But I loved you when I left you. Can love help us now?"

"It can. It's all that can. Listen, Alice. I-I know now what you meant about transgressing the law, and about love life profaned dealing death, and disintegration. I've been through it today. I started out here just now toto-well, you know how you felt about me. Just the thought of you and another man-and I was a brute-just a brute-a murderous, raging brute. Then it came and smashed me between the eyes-what you said when you left me. And this time I got your meaning. Oh, believe me, I got it! And I woke up. Alice, did you think a divorce would help you to stop caring for me?"

She burst into tears.

"Yes—yes—I had to stop caring—or —or——"

"Or come back to me?" he asked. She spoke pleadingly, lifting her

hands, with palms pressed loosely, in a way she had under stress.

"Something must happen—to—to stop the hurt. I—this year—alone! Oh, Steve, Steve, if you do understand at last why I had to leave you, show me how I can come back to you now! Break down the law that parted us! Do it—somehow! Make it right for me to come back!"

"It is right. We've got to come together again. That's the law. It's time to stop suffering now, and do right. There's no virtue in staying in hell just because you've slipped in like a fool. Hell's never a right condition for any one, you can bet on that. The thing to do is to get out, quick-and stay out.'

He stooped suddenly, and lifted her out of her seat, and up to him.

"Alice-sweetheart-I'm thinking of what you said once about a woman being like earth in spring to her husband. It's springtime now, Alice. Doesn't it tell you that you must come back to me?

Her lips clung to his for answer. He wrapped her in her shawl tenderly, and led her toward the motor.

"I don't want your mother to be anxious," Steve said, as he stepped in beside her. "You can phone her tonight-from your home," he added

As they rolled slowly toward the gate,

Alice cried out suddenly:

"Oh, Steve! Oh, goodness! Mr. Martindale! The supper! Oh!"

"Say! I forgot all about him!" They looked back. On the porch, gazing blankly after them, stood two men. One wore a white apron, and held aloft a chafing dish, which steamed forth precious odors into the chill and empty air. The other held a white bowl from which small, fine, greenish, welloiled leaves slid unobserved, one by one, over the veranda rail into the dust.

"What do you say to a lobster with me?" Steve asked, victory and laughing joy making his face the face of a boy.

"I say yes," she cried, laughing back

And the great woman-earth, with the word of spring in her heart, laughed, too, in flows of silver moon wind for joy that her law had dominion.



THE END OF THE DAY

SITTING with folded hands, With weary eyes and dim, She sees the glow on the western sands, The sun on the ocean's rim; And her heart turns back to the nights Of song and roses and love, When life was sweet in the diamond lights Of myriad stars above.

She hears the wind in the trees. The summer rain on the grass, The prattle of children about her knees; Soft shadows come, and pass, And cluster about her chair, And fairy fingers blow Kisses sweet as April air. From lips of long ago.

Sorrow and pain are past, Passion and yearning are dead; Evening shadows are falling fast About her drooping head, Sitting with folded hands, With weary eyes and dim, She sees the glow on the western sands, The sun on the ocean's rim. CHARLES W. KENNEDY.

BY THE GRACE OF ALLAH F. BERKELEY SMITH



HE awning shading the long terrace of the Grande Taverne was being slowly raised, as the dying sun burned its way to bed back of the cool green

trees of the Luxembourg Gardens, leaving this paradise of students and their sweethearts in the dusk and mystery of the soft spring twilight. A twilight under the spell of which the heart beat quick; a twilight in which murmured words were stifled by kisses given and not stolen; a twilight keen with the savage fragrance of the oozing ground, of stirring sap and sturdy buds bursting their bonds, and sweet with the perfume of the horse-chestnut blossoms and the lilacs-a fragrance of growing things that filled one's lungs with the drug of spring, and stirred one's blood like a draft of old wine.

Beneath this rare perfume of spring, the night air lay soft, and the gentle breeze of evening stirring the topmost leaves of the towering trees, in which the fat, cooing pigeons were settling for the night, wafted this fragrance of the old gardens across the asphalted square, with its single fountain spraying the backs of a lazy school of goldfish, and sent it on to mingle with the more worldly perfumes that lurked beneath the slowly rising awning—the clean scent of freshly mixed absinths, of lemons squeezed upon cracked ice, of stray blue whiffs from cigarettes, and those subtler perfumes from hidden

sachets tucked somewhere within dainty corsages fresh from the washerwoman, and through whose lace interstices gleamed flesh that was young, and firm, and fair, and now and then the ends of a narrow ribbon of pink, or of blue to match her eyes.

It was spring, and the world that lay beyond the Latin Quarter counted but vaguely, like a distant land one had

never seen.

To be young and care free, with a few francs still in one's pocket; to have youth, I say, and to turn the big steel key in the worn lock of one's studio door at sundown and go forth—where? Ah, we never knew; but across the gardens of the Luxembourg, and to the terrace of the Grande Taverne first, where all of we Bohemians, struggling daily in paint or in clay, met at sundown for our apéritif, and then to dine modestly in the gay old tavern, and to let the night bring whatever adventure it had not provided—ah, that was living!

We were like one big family: Jean and Marcelle, Yvonne and Gaston, La Petite Amélie, Raoul, Valdin and Rose Javet, Marie Céleste, Claudine, Henriette, Suzanne, and so many more who

came to the terrace nightly. "Bonjour! Ca va?"

"Et toi?"

How many of these cheery greetings came from brave little hearts, from which emanated an esprit and a spirit of camaraderie as sincere as a religion. They were honest, for they never stole. They were brave, for they never demanded. They were discreet, with that inborn sense of discretion and contentment which Anglo-Saxon women are ignorant of. They possessed nothing, yet they gave with an unselfish generosity unknown to the rich. They were proud—not of themselves, but of any good fortune that came to those whom they loved.

When Raoul obtained an honorable mention for his Salon picture, Céleste's pride was a revelation, and they lived

to love and be loved in turn.

To have one say: "She is a good comrade," meant more to them than to say: "She is a princess."

She had entered the Taverne an hour before any of us had reached the ter-

race this evening in spring,

A total stranger, even to that veteran garcon de café, François, whose memory was colossal. She made a strange little figure, sitting alone, before the latest copy of "Le Rire" and a coffee cream.

In the corner she had chosen it was nearly dark, for the cavernous old room within, with its gilded ceiling, was never lighted until its tables began to fill for dinner; yet, from where I sat on the terrace, close to the open window, I could see her plainly. There is a certain luminosity about beauty which lends a distinction to its details in shadow.

She was small—the figure of a child rounded into womanhood, that point of exquisite development which only occurs once in a lifetime. There was about her whole person an air of grace, of gentleness and contentment. Neither was she ill at ease, for she raised her dark eyes calmly now and then toward the open door, and turned the gay pages of "Le Rire" with her small, dimpled hands, smiling to herself with the eagerness of a child devouring a picture book.

I noticed, too, that her face was of that pure oval one sees in Oriental women, and that its tint was olive, and of a rare translucence. When she smiled,

two little dimples appeared close to her small mouth, which, when open, revealed her pearly teeth. Her hair, which she wore in a bandeau neatly drawn over the tips of her little ears, was of a soft, dark brown, deeper than auburn, and shaded by a simple hat of the same black velvet as her dress, which was perfectly plain, and buttoned with many little buttons down the front-all the way down, I could see, to her small feet, which did not quite reach the floor. The same velvet had served, too, to make an old-fashioned reticule which lay upon the table beside her gloves, trimmed at the wrists with a narrow binding of the same cloth. What more could the velvet have done? Had she not used every vestige of it wisely and well?

One feels a certain respect before such charming economy. It seemed to reveal to me something of her character. Half an hour passed, every minute of which I fully expected some one luckier than myself would arrive and offer his apologies for his lateness. Still no one came, and she being well hidden from the gaze of the terrace, few even

were aware of her presence.

An irresistible desire seized me to speak to her—this strange little olive beauty! Her small hands were a delight to watch—they and the pure contour of her features—and yet I dared not move. We Bohemians are, either by nature or experience, more discreet in speaking to a girl alone than are many others.

I motioned to François. It seems she had arrived over two hours ago, and only addressed him with the single word, "Café," which she pronounced with a strange accent. Cream, he had ventured, pointing to the spout of the coffeepot's mate, and she had nodded.

"Then I brought madame 'Le Rire,'" added this veteran waiter. "It is better when ladies who are not of the Taverne

wish to be alone."

He had barely finished speaking when she raised her head, and, to my surprise, our eyes met—she meeting my gaze steadily. She did not smile, just looked at me with a certain childlike curiosity in which there were both confidence and respect. I could resist no longer. I got up, descended the three steps into the Taverne, and, crossing to her corner, stood before her, and lifted

my hat.

"Forgive me," I said; "will you be good enough to pose for me? A thousand pardons. You are alone, is it not so? And for so long—and a stranger—" These stupid, tactless sentences rushed from me with hurried unreasoning, but, to my joy, she looked up and smiled—ah, such a gentle smile! I waited for her to speak. The clear olive of her checks flushed a little; then she shrugged her shoulders helplessly.

Sapristi! She could not speak a word of French, and, as I took my seat on the worn leather seat beside her, she clasped her little hands in her velvet lap; but I saw by the look in her eyes she was content, for she sighed.

"Forgive me," I said, in English; but she shook her head, and then I halted and ventured again, this time in the few words of Italian I had picked up; then in German, and finally in my easier smattering of Hungarian. Slowly her face became radiant.

"Egen! Egen!" she exclaimed, and clapped her hands. "Roumélie! Roumélie!" she said, in the loveliest voice—cool, and low, and gentle—and she pointed out of the window over the towering trees in the possible direction

of her native land.

The Taverne now blazed up in light, rapidly the tables filled, and every furtive eye in the room was upon us. Some of them with ill-disguised jealousy, especially two young architects from Boston, of irreproachable Parisian conduct, Harvard manners, and a Beacon Street accent, But Raoul and Valdin only smiled, and lifted their hands in congratulation. And then an idea occurred to me, and I beckoned to Rose Javet to join us, for I knew my little lady of the velvet gown would be safe with her during my absence-that big, strong blonde, with her ready wit and her heart of gold.

"Eh bien, my old one, you're in luck! Mon Dieu, but she is beautiful!" exclaimed Rose, and not many women

compliment another in the same Taverne. As I started to rise, my little lady of the velvet gown looked at me pleadingly, so strangely, as if I were her master, and she was awaiting my bid-

ling

"I shall be back," I explained, in Hungarian, "we shall dine." And after I had repeated it slowly twice she understood, and smiled contentedly, murmuring something in her own tongue, and inclining her head in a deferential little bow. And so I left them together, and went in search of her language to the musty shop of Tranchard, the old librarian, whose stock was in continual disorder, three doors above.

Tranchard, who reads everything an inch from the page, was bent over the evening paper, scanning it microscopically by the aid of a shadeless kerosene lamp, placed on a packing box in the middle of two heaps of secondhand

knowledge.

"Eh, Monsieur Tranchard!" I cried, as I entered. "Have you by chance among this muss of yours a phrase book in French and Roumélian?"

The old man looked up solemnly, and

removed his spectacles.

"Eh voilà! Monsieur Pierre, an idea, and at this hour! Ah, my poor monsieur, a phrase book in the language of Roumélie," he wheezed. "Eh, eh! Of Roumélie—of Rou—"

He got up stiffly, and his gaunt hands searched along a dusty shelf packed

with pamphlets.

"You have no idea, my good Tranchard," I explained, by way of encouragement, "how badly you can need a phrase book in French and Roumélian when you need it."

"You are going on a voyage?" he questioned, turning slowly from his search, and scrutinizing me wearily over

his spectacles,

"Yes!" I cried enthusiastically. "A long voyage, to the land called Happiness, by way of the road of the Two Hearts. A swift road, Père Tranchard, for chance lends you a hand as guide, and there is no lagging with chance, once having grasped it. Make haste, my good Tranchard. Search! Search!

Surely a Roumélian student has sold you something. Hurry, for I start to-

night!"

"Eh! Eh!" he wheezed, still regarding me queerly, his hand still on the shelf. "When I have one absinth, I stop, my good Monsieur Pierre."

But I let him think what he chose.

But I let him think what he chose. I saw that he was tugging at something thin and pink, wedged between a dusty dozen, cinched with a string.

Presently he snatched it out.

"Had I not a good memory?" said he. "And at this hour! Parbleu! Four sous to you," he added, "since, between you and me, I believe you are either

drunk or crazy!"

"Neither, my excellent friend in need," I replied, and wrung the hand that had searched so diligently, and found—our language, mated so nicely side by side, in just the sentences we should need. Indeed, there were too many—we should never need them all. Many seemed superfluous as I read by the glittering Taverne lights on my way back to my little lady of the velvet gown.

I love We love
Thou lovest You love
He loves They love
And, of course, the very words for
"The lobster of my uncle," and "The

white wine of my aunt."

The spring weeks, filled with their delicious warmth, went by one after another, each new morning a joy to be alive in. Mornings that found us together in the gardens of the Luxembourg, beside the stagnant fountain of the Medicis, the pink phrase book between us, her hand in mine-that exquisite little hand, that I loved to turn over and over, to enjoy with my eyes as one would a precious ivory. And she learned quickly from the pink book, which, indeed, we were never without, and which she carried for safe-keeping in the velvet reticule in which lay all manner of strange things-the certificate of her birth, a spool of black silk, and a needle, to give first aid to the injured velvet gown, and a small silver box of Oriental design, evidently very

old, studded with turquoises, and secreting a vial of attar of roses, which she now and then touched to the lobes

of her little ears.

She told everything, over and over again, from the beginning; of her quick decision that day in Philippopoli to leave him, of his ungovernable temper, of her letter to her family, and the one she left for him, sending it to his barracks at the hour of his inspection of his regiment, an hour when he could not follow her—and of her flight to Paris with the little money she had so patiently saved.

"Listen, Pierre, my beloved: There is no anger in me," she would repeat. "Thou hast never seen me angry."

"But in thy country surely thou hast a right to love whom thou wilt?"

I declared.

"We must obey," she returned simply. "One must serve faithfully one's master. When thou art chosen, thou must follow. It was in one of his books that I read of Paris, that one could be free there, to be chosen, and be loved, not as a slave. And so, as thou knowest, it was to the big café that I had heard him tell of, that I came first after the train, and waited—and thou."

Her dark eyes filled brilliantly, but she was smiling as she drew my cheek

to her own.

"Allah is good," she whispered.

The pink book slipped and fell to the ground, and a fat pigeon, incensed at being disturbed from the gravel, thrashed up through the feathery green leaves above us to quarrel with his wife.

There is an end to all happiness. It is the heavy price we pay, and it is called The End. There is no torture conceived by the human mind that can equal it, since it is filled with hopelessness, and the intensity of its pain is made keener by separation. The only thing The End lacks is death. Some of us accept the latter eagerly, since death under these conditions seems to assume the dignity of a true friend.

My uncle had insisted on this voyage of mine to America—his reasons, his interests, a young, active man to manage his interests from afar. At his age, he should have been content with his château in Normandy, and his shooting. My "welfare"! Bon Dieu, can they not invent? My "career"! Ah, yes, my career—what did I care for my career? The pressure came heavily from all sides, with that greased ingenuity of a combined family. It is amazing how we crumple up and accede when one's own blood calls.

There is no reason in it, neither would I have crumbled up or acceded had it

not been for her.

"It is the wish of thy people," she said. "Have I not loved thee well? I will not have it said of thee thou art not brave. Thou wilt come back—listen, Pierre—back to me, for thou art in my heart forever."

That is what she said, and we cried together through our last dinner at the "big café." Yet she was braver than I, for the one who stays and waits is always the bravest—and it was to Rose Javet that I turned this time in my hour of need.

"Heart! You speak of heart!" Rose is so poor, for she is very independent, and cares for none save her old friends.

"You will do as you promise, Rose?" I went on, with hurried insistence, during the few brief moments we were alone that last evening after dinner,

"Yes, my old one," she said, and the look in her honest blue eyes was as

good as her sworn bond.

"You will see that she dresses warmly, Rose, and not be reckless like the rest, and wear some stupid décolleté mode in winter. A good fire at your home, the good soup at night. Here, if you are with her, she will be well in the little room off yours, where the sun shines."

"Yes, my little one."
"Rose, I love her."

"Yes, my little one; I know."

"No, my old one; there will be no

one else."

And at the train which left the Gare St. Lazare the next morning, she whom

I was leaving was seized with trembling, but she did not cry.

Two years passed-two years in which I did my duty by my uncle, and in which her letters made my exile in America all the harder, for they were faithful, long letters, that told me of her daily life, of all that happened in and around the old Taverne. Letters full of the sameness of devotion and the serious philosophy of a child. She was still with Rose Javet, and worked for a modiste in the Rue de Seine during the months when the little modiste needed an extra hand; and when the work grew slack, she fashioned hats for her friends of the big café—out of nothing, a remnant, a ribbon, and generally the same feather, which her dimpled hands knew how to place with a chic that is a talent in itself.

And then a day came when she decided to return to her people, for reasons that concerned the welfare of her parents, who were getting old; and it was thus that my little lady of the velvet gown became gradually a memory, for six months later, when I returned to Paris, she was gone, and I understood, for she had written me much, and not even Rose Javet could tell me

more.

Two years passed. It was spring again, and I stood, a stranger in a strange land, upon the deck of an energetic little steamboat that had picked me up at the Marguerite Island, with its baths and its rose garden, and was now breasting the moonlit tide of the Danube, zigzagging across this fairy river to touch at the small stations on its way back to Pest.

There is a strange fascination about the Danube in the moonlight—the river in the moonlight is purely Japanese. The air was soft to-night—the air of the Orient—soft as the water in the ancient baths of Buda, soft as the scent of the roses I had just left, for upon the Marguerite Island one can bathe to the music of the gypsies.

Possibly it was the scent of these roses in spring that made me think of

her. I do not know. I only know that with a sense of loneliness upon the deck of the steamboat that was now sheering away from a station with an unpronounceable name, a sudden desire to see her took possession of me. This wild desire to find her blotted out

all else in my mind.

Are we not strange beings? Find her, but where? There was not one chance in a thousand, yet I dared not confess it, even to myself; and as the steamboat drew away from Buda and swung near the glittering lights of Pest, I found myself searching the hidden recesses of a worn portfolio for a folded bit of paper that had lain there since

the morning of our parting.

It was still there, I discovered by the light of the deck lantern, but so creased that it nearly fell apart as I opened it and read her address in Philippopoli. This cracked scrap of paper now assumed an importance which I cannot describe; my whole happiness seemed to depend upon its preservation, and I stood there drunk with a great joy, and all the old days came back to me. That gentle evening in spring when I first espied her sitting in the corner of the Grande Taverne. It all seemed as yesterday now. I could hardly wait until the busy little steamer touched the wharf at Pest to send a telegram.

I wrote it in the simplest French, clear and concise, that she might not be puzzled; and, with a dogged confidence in the charity of Allah, sent it forth in the night, a distance of over thirty hours by train. And all that night the band of Toll Janczi played to me in a smoky cafe beneath the street, for I could not sleep. And there is

comfort in a gypsy's fiddle.

At dawn I went to bed, and when I awoke the sun was shining, and I crossed the river to old Buda, and tramped up an ancient road that led to a fort close beside a little café with a garden, in which I breakfasted at noon. And there, gazing down over Buda, I killed time and the dragging hours. The wind blew fresh, and one was well there in the little garden, and I dared not hope for an answer much before night.

Time and time again, I said to myself: "There is not one chance in a thousand—you are a fool!" And a strange dread would seize me, and then again I would take fresh courage.

It was dusk when I left Buda and recrossed the river—a river full of the vague mystery of doubt and hope to

me now.

And there, in the telegraph office, lay my answer—an answer which I crumpled up from sheer nervousness before I gained the fresh air and broke the

seal.

Ah, you do not know! You can never know what I felt! It was as if the whole world was singing joyously in my ears, and I felt faint.

PHILIPPOPOLIS, Tuesday.
Arrive Thursday, one o'clock.

As the hands on the clock of the big station crawled slowly toward one, I gazed down the empty track under the steam-filled shed with a beating heart. Had she changed? How incredible it was! The chance I had taken! Do not say you do not believe in miracles! I seemed to be living in some strange dream, in which the good fairy was in a few moments to wave her jeweled wand, and cry: "Behold!"

Five minutes more—but the clock was wrong, and the train late. No one seemed to know exactly how late.

"It came from very far," explained a

swarthy official lazily.

Half an hour passed. The minutes dragged so the hands of the clock seemed to have grown weary and stopped. One hour! One torturing hour, in which I paced up and down. The strain was beginning to tell on me. Ah, Mon Dieu! Then suddenly the wailing shriek of an engine—my hands grew cold. The next instant the express from the Orient came rumbling into the great shed, coughing up a cloud of steam that filled the shed, while out of the train poured its passengers like hurrying phantoms in a fog.

"Pierre!"
It was she!

A trim little figure in a velvet gown, gray with the dust of the East, and in

each hand she carried two round paper hatboxes.

"Pierre! Pierre!"

Both hatboxes fell to the ground. One rolled, and a Hungarian gentleman ran after it, picked it up, and set it down beside its mate; but she did not see, for her firm little arms were about my neck, and her lips were murmuring "Pierre, Pierre!" against my own.

There were days when we wandered in the soft sunlight over Buda. There were twilights when the small steamer carried us up to the Island of Roses, and she sat beside me on the deck, her hand in mine, and all the world seemed glad. There were whole days which we spent idling along the edge of the

Danube as far at Vatz.

Our river here rippled with a lazy cadence against a pebbly shore, upon which we built a fire and breakfasted, and watched the water mills, built on piles far out on the turquoise tide, turning slowly as they ground the peasant corn; and beyond them lay stretches of waving rice beds, out of which started up now and then a flight of wild duck. And beyond these lay the velvety green lowlands from which rose in the shining haze jagged peaks of amethyst and jade. Sometimes a passing gypsy played for us. Often a huge catfish would swirl to the surface close to the pebbly shore.

Ah, how much she had to tell me! Of her mother's illness; of how, before her return, she had learned of his being ordered far out of her country with

his regiment,

She had not changed, save that she was more beautiful—a woman now, with still the eager heart of a child, and the song of her voice was restful. Often she counted my money, that the modest sum might last long; and her economy was amazing. She could invent little ways to save that were unknown to me.

And yet again the end came, with just enough left for her voyage back to her land and for mine to Paris. It was a parting that would have been unbearable had not she promised to return to work again for the little modiste in the Rue de Seine.

How blind is our confidence in the

"You are getting old." That is what I say to myself. "You are forty-three, and you are even poorer than in your youth, for you are more philosophical with what you have, and, besides, happiness is not given at your age. It is bought. People are beginning to have a certain respect for you, which is exasperating. Younger men now address you as 'Monsieur.' If any one says 'Tiens, c'est toi?' to you now, you smile gratefully, and something out of the past grips at your heart.

"Where are Marcelle, and Céleste, and Yvonne, and Rose Javet? Gone! And the Grande Taverne has become a brazen bazaar of nourishment. Be glad if any one raps at your studio door. You have a store of memories, but when you recall them, it is like gazing into an empty drawer that had once con-

tained a precious treasure.

"You have grown neater in your appearance, for to be slovenly at your age is to be decrepid. You have grown firm in your prejudices, and little things irritate you. You are getting to be an absurd old ass. In a few years you will be forced to wear broadcloth and a red ribbon in your buttonhole, and people will address you as 'Maitre,' which is worse than 'Monsieur.'

"The devil! And you expect some

one to love you at your age?

I looked up from my reverie out of the studio window, over the sea of leaden roofs, glistening under the thrash of a January rain—the chimney hoods whining and creaking, as if in pain, under the buffeting onslaught of every fresh gust. Then I seized my storm coat, hat, and umbrella, and, turning the key in the rusty lock of my studio door, started to join my old friend, Delacour, across the Seine. The wind blew the rain straight in one's face. I lowered my umbrella, and forged ahead.

As I turned down the Rue Mazarine, on my way to the Quay, I caught sight only of the feet of the passers-by, and

thus I continued down this narrow ravine of a street, whose sidewalk shrinks against the fronts of its ancient houses at the very places where it

should widen.

On now past the hobnailed boots of a coal man, past the trim, high-heel boots of a mademoiselle, who, I discovered upon raising my umbrella, was pretty. Past a dignified old gentleman hurrying along the dripping walls of the Institute—shoes out of date, but neatly brushed. Past a butcher boy, and two priests, in shoes that might have fitted two giant grandmothers; past a pair of little shoes and a glimpse of a black skirt, and I passed them with a strange sensation. I stopped, and raised the umbrella, for I had awkwardly touched the figure in passing.

"I demand pardon, madame," I apologized, and turned to raise my hat. Then my heart for the moment seemed to stop

beating.

She had stopped also, and her eyes were wide open, and looking into mine with the stare of a woman whose heart had also nearly stopped beating.

A short, round little woman, with a full oval face, no waist, and small hands gloved in lisle thread, broken at the thumb and forefinger, which grasped an umbrella with a leaden swan for a handle.

Neither of us had yet uttered a word. "Pierre! Pierre!" she exclaimed faintly, in the labored voice of a ghost. "C'est toi, c'est bien toi?"

And we stood there trembling, unable for the moment to speak.

Then I took her hand in mine—a hand which did not seem alive—and nodded to a passing fiacre.

"Twenty-two Rue des Deux Amies," I believe I stammered to the grizzled

coachman.

"Bien, monsieur."

But she hesitated, even drew back, still trembling, her foot on the muddy step, a pleading look in her eyes. Then a sudden faintness seized her, and, without a word, she entered the stuffy fiacre, smelling of the stale cigar of the last client, and burst into tears.

We had so much to say we could say

nothing. Now and then fragmentary sentences escaped us as we rattled on; mostly apropos of her hat, which was knocked askew and out of fashion—happily—like her dear dress, the skirt of which was shiny. Then I unbuttoned a worn mite of a glove, stripping it gently from a small, pudgy hand, red from housework, with two dimples in place of one, and showing those unmistakable signs of industry—the roughened pricks of a needle.

"Listen, Pierre," she began, taking courage, and then faltered. "It is not right that I go there," she breathed. "It will be only for a moment, since

thou hast insisted."

"Thou shalt come, nevertheless," I remember saying, "if it is only to welcome thee as far as my door."

She drew close to me, shuddering as if the eye of Allah were upon her.

"Listen, Pierre," she murmured, gripping my hand. "I am married. I have told him all."

She was quite pale, her lips parted in a timid smile. For some moments neither spoke. Then she resumed nervously, her voice, little by little, gaining

courage:

"I have a great esteem for him. He is very kind. He is one to whom I owe much. We have three boarders—a gentleman, a lady, and her son. It keeps me very busy," she explained seriously, "for we cannot afford to keep a servant."

I lifted the small, red hand to my

ips.

"Pierre, it is pretty no longer," she

The windows of the fiacre shivered as we rattled into the Rue des Deux

She drew hastily from her breast a tiny silver watch, and glanced at it with a start.

"Four minutes to five!" she exclaimed. "Pierre, Pierre, I cannot, even for a moment! It is too late."

"Yes," I returned. "You are right. It is too late. Where art thou going?"

"To the Rue Jean Roubet. Pierre, thou wilt forgive me?"

I leaned out of the window, and touched_the old cabman's arm.

"To the Rue Jean Roubet." "Bien, monsieur."

"Tell him to stop at the corner, at the end of the big wall of the hospital," she added nervously.

"Is he ill?" I questioned anxiously.
"Ah, no! Allah be praised!" And
for an instant her face became radiant.

"Listen, Pierre. Thou must know:

He is very wise."

Again the free hand went to her breast, and she drew forth a printed paper, unfolded it, and pointed to a paragraph as we neared the corner of the Rue Jean Roubet.

"It is he," she murmured as I read:

Friday, at five o'clock, in room B, lecture by the Professor Delfontaine on Anæsthesia and the Heart.

The fiacre stopped at the corner under the great wall, cheerless and massive as that of a prison in the rain.

"Thou must not get out," she said gently, with a pleading look.

Then she rose, leaned forward, kissed me reverently on both cheeks, squeezed past my knees, opened the door quickly, and was gone.

It was the end, and I sat there for some moments, immovable, staring at the tears sliding down the blurred windows of the fiacre, my heart tingling with a strange feeling of mingled peace and gratitude.



POLLEN

H, little cloud of frail golden dust Poised in the air, How helplessly the shimmering motes are held! How briefly there!

How swiftly scattered to the sunny earth, Or caught by showers! How few, wind-sifted, find their preparate home In waiting flowers!

And yet, in all such wondrous power resides As fills the fields With all the glow of grain that to our skill Fair harvest yields;

Such power as clothes the fallow lands anew In verdant weed, And ministers alike to heart's desire And humble need.

Such power as builds the forest on the hills, Oh, golden dust, Such power as holds our very life in thrall, We proudly trust! MARGUERITE OGDEN BIGELOW.



CHAPTER I.



HE verdict of the coroner's jury in "The Case of Jacob Lancer," as it was called in the newspapers, seemed to the public wholly plausible and

satisfactory. But to Mary, the only child of the dead man, the decision was horrifying, unbelievable, and the dark facts clamored loudly for a different ex-

planation.

She was a slender, graceful girl of twenty-four, of a spiritual and engaging kind of prettiness, with eyes that were sometimes slate-gray and sometimes purple like the shadowed sea, but that always had the haze of a dream in them, even when she smiled. She had lived alone with her father in one of the stereotyped brownstone houses that line New York's uptown streets. From childhood she had been familiar with the name of Colonel Nicholas Enderby. He was at the present time one of the big American capitalists, a great traveler and collector of antiquities. But her father and he had been friends in boyhood in a small Virginia town. For many years Jacob Lancer had been his secretary.

All that was in the past. During the last ten years a slowly consuming disease had turned Lancer into a recluse.

He had a comfortable income, and had lived in quiet luxury. Seriouslooking men, often in shabby clothes, would come and confer with him in his laboratory or study.

To occasional questions from Mary about his visitors, he would reply:

"They are men out in the world, child, their brains full of schemes. I have knowledge that helps them, while they keep me alive. I can't go out in the real battle any more, Mary, but they bring me news of it here, to my quiet fireside."

The first inexplicable thing had occurred on a certain Monday afternoon. Mr. Lancer, for the first time in weeks, had gone out. He carried a large valise, departed in a taxicab, and returned in one. His mood was a silent one. He said nothing as to why he had gone, or where. After his return he went at once to his study, and remained there a long time with the door locked. Later, Mary noticed a deep scratch on his cheek, and also that his wrist pained him as if from a twist or sprain. He admitted having met with a slight accident. She knew he was sensitive about his feebleness, and did not question him further.

The day that was to be like a scar upon her life began peacefully. Mr. Lancer had lounged before the fire in his book-lined study most of the afternoon. At night Mary had gone to the theater. When she returned there was a line from him on the hall table—a custom of his: "Have gone to bed. Good night, my dear."

A wild storm awakened her after one o'clock, and she became aware that somewhere in the house a man's voice was speaking. She put on a dressing robe and stepped into the hall. The voice came from her father's study.

She ran down, and would have entered, but that the first words distinctly heard relieved her: "You will have the written instructions to show." The tone was heavy, but guarded, the "r's" slurred gutturally, so that they sounded like "w's." A murmur of assent to the statement came from another part of the room, and then her father's answer:

"I'm perfectly satisfied."

Mary decided that these were some of the familiar, erratic-looking men who visited her father, and meaning, when she brought him his morning papers, to warn him against the folly of such late hours, went to bed and slept soundly. Alas, those small, accustomed doings, the habits that are so usual we scarcely notice them-when Fate has crashed into them, and the Unforeseen has branded them, how they gape at and cry to us forevermore! She never took the morning papers to her father again. new English butler found him with arms flung out across the study table, his body convulsed from strychnine, an empty goblet beside him.

After this, undreamed-of facts about her father came down upon Mary in a succession of small blows. It was discovered that the men who had visited him were inventors, geologists, experimentalists of several sorts, staking their all upon some hinge or screw that was to bring a fortune; or upon some mine or oil well that was to belch out its

equivalent of gold.

Jacob Lancer had speculated in all these ventures; his fortune was gone; his notes were out on every hand; even his life-insurance policies had been hypothecated. But these were trifles compared to the discovery which seemed to prove beyond doubt that he had taken his own life.

Several years before, when about to start with his son on the most dangerous of his wanderings, Colonel Enderby had placed sacredly and secretly in his old friend's care something that he held to be invaluable. This wonderful thing was a sixteenth-century gold missal case with translucent enamels, the work of a great Italian artist, and valuable enough of itself to sell for a small fortune. But within it there was something even more precious, more costly—a huge, silver comb set with perfect emeralds and black pearls. That it had been presented to Diane de Poitiers by Henry II. was vouched for by its documentary history, and by the engraved royal seal above a line of love in old French.

These things had belonged to Colonel Enderby's wife, a beautiful Spaniard, whose death had turned him into a lonely and incorrigible wanderer. The missal case had been placed in Jacob Lancer's safe-deposit box. Had Colonel Enderby died while upon his travels, written instructions within it bequeathed it to the Metropolitan Mu-

seum.

Mary's first knowledge of this unique treasure had come a few days after her father's death through cable messages sent to her from Egypt by Colonel Enderby. But the huge, tin box in the safe-deposit vault was found to hold useless mining shares and practically nothing else. When it became known that Jacob Lancer had taken something from it on the day he had—according to his daughter's testimony—been hurt, it was supposed that he had then removed the case to the safe built into his study. Upon investigation, this theory also vanished into thin air.

At the inquest Mary had passionately and insistently recounted the details that might help cast a doubt on what seemed obvious guilt. But judgment did not halt. A slip on the pavement would have accounted for her father's injuries. The butler swore that he had not admitted any visitor to the house on that last night; no one had been seen to come or go; not a chair in the study, save Jacob Lancer's, was displaced; there was but one cigar end. The safe had not been forced; its contents were orderly.

The sincerity of Mary's testimony about hearing the voices was not patent-

ly doubted, but, as some of the papers had suggested, awakened suddenly by the storm, and while still half dreaming, her imagination might have played pranks; or the whole incident might have been a realistic dream. The verdict was arrived at speedily: A man false to a great and sacred trust had died by his own hand rather than face

the consequences of his acts.

Late one afternoon, about a week after her father's burial, Mary was sitting in a leather armchair in the study, her eyes ranging in helpless pain over the familiar place, when, absently thrusting her hand down in the crease between the soft, bulging seat and the arm of the chair, her unexpectant fingers touched something with sharp edges. She had drawn out an ordinary business card, creased and folded:

S. PEACOCK. No. 195 Great Portland Street.

As she turned it over and over, noticing its soilure, and that the smell of pipe smoke, mixed with a curious, rank perfume like barbers' pomade, clung to it, she knew that it had never lain in her father's wallet. Her languor and sadness quickened to a faint interest. It might be a clew—it might. At least, it was something needing an explanation. She sat looking at it for a long time, and then put it carefully away.

CHAPTER II.

Colonel Enderby's lawyers, Cruith & Weyling, had their offices in Wall Street. They had a visitor one icy March morning in the person of Mary Lancer. Before entering she had felt determined, almost inspired, but after a few moments there her spirit lost its optimism. It is astonishing how the individuality of people attaches to the places they inhabit, even to such an impersonal thing as a business office. The richly carpeted space was empty of everything but the square, stately desk that rose like an undecorated altar to the god of business and practicality.

The walls were lined with solid, severe

books in brown bindings.

The flavor of logic and reason permeated the still air, and of a sudden made Mary's quest seem visionary and childish. She had seen Mr. Cruith only once before, a listener at the coroner's inquest. When he entered now he repeated his former impression—an old man, calm and pale, his eyes clear yet with life's weariness in them; a man not unkind, but so serene, so immaculate, he suggested that he had outlived the pangs either of pain or sympathy that visit ordinary, impressionable people.

"I'm glad to see you, Miss Lancer," he said, and took her hand vaguely for an instant before he sat down at his desk, "What can I do for you?"

"Are you very busy?" she asked, her

voice excited.

"Shall I be quite truthful?" He smiled faintly. "I am so busy that I can only spare you ten minutes. But if it proves necessary we can make this merely the preface to another conversation."

"Then I'll come to the point at once. Mr. Cruith, my father was innocent. I mean to prove it. I must prove it. But I am so alone, I feel frightened at the task before me. You are the only one I can think of who might help me. You are Colonel Enderby's lawyer, you knew my father. Won't you help me?"

She was a picture of youth and tragedy. Out of the intense blackness of her crape veil her face gleamed like ivory, the purplish-gray of her eyes and the wan pink of her mouth the only stains upon it. Even the logic-locked sensibilities of Mr. Cruith felt her appeal.

"If you can show me how, I will do anything in my power. But I warn you"—the words were soft, yet firm and absolute—"that if you are starting upon this business without *solid facts* that convince you, you will be laying up for yourself a stock of futility and misery. Now tell me."

She did so, speaking rapidly: Her father's love of Colonel Enderby; his fear of death; the mysterious injuries he received on such an important day;

the guttural voice with the German accent heard so late at night; the fact that Lawson, the butler, was a new man.

She was about to speak of the card, found weeks before, but, after a soft, respectful knock, a clerk entered, and whispered hurriedly to Mr. Cruith. When they were left alone again, Mary saw that what interest he had felt had faded, that his mind was now upon other things. It is difficult to be eloquent and convincing when you feel your listener would be glad to have you go.

Mr. Cruith clasped his hands, and

looked at her kindly.

"I am going to advise you, Miss Lancer, and to the best of my ability. Do not attempt the impossible at present." She could not keep the tears from rushing to her eyes. "You are nervous. You have been through a frightful ordeal. You are worn out. I want you to rest."

"But my father? I loved him. I cannot rest and remember."

"Try. I met your aunt, Mrs. Duncan, the other day. She told me she is anxious to have you go on a holiday journey to Mexico with her. By all means do so. I am glad you have a relative who has come forward to chaperon you, and who has money enough to take you traveling. The change will heal your mind. When you come back you will be better fitted for the task you have set yourself to perform. In the meantime, if your faith in your father is right—and it is not unreasonable to think that it is—something may have developed before you return—some stray fact—"

The clerk entered again, and in a disheartened way Mary stood up. She dropped her veil, and muttering a confused good-by, hurried to the door. But Mr. Cruith's voice detained her:

"You are not annoyed, Miss Lancer?"
"No, Mr. Cruith. I believe I needed this lesson. This visit has taught me that you are like the rest of the world; that I stand utterly alone, and must make my fight alone."

"Well, so that you won't misjudge me, won't think me unsympathetic, I will tell you what I would have spared you. Since the inquest I have had Lawson fully investigated. His career has been irreproachable. Therefore one of the timbers of your suspicion, you see, is unsound. However," he said, with the impassive kindness of one not vitally concerned, "if later on you can come to me with some new facts to support your opinion, you can count on my doing my utmost to help you."

Though she went away with this promise in her ears, she was conscious only of the sighing refrain from her soul: "Alone! I must fight alone. There is no help for me anywhere. I alone

believe. I alone!"

But the words gradually lost their sting. Gradually, too, a strange calm filled her. As she went toward the Rector Street elevated station, she becameconscious for the first time of the spiritual, awesome, directing influence that was to play an important part in her life's story. She was not alone. She had a sense of illumination; an assurance that she was to be helped by one who knew. And who, she questioned, could through knowledge help her, except her father? In a mysterious way, too fine for human grasping, he had seemed for a tiny fraction of time to have touched her thoughts.

The experience left her so excited and speculative she walked in a dreamy way from the sheltered part of the platform down to the extreme edge. This was a curious thing for her to do, for it was now snowing hard, and she had no um-Yet, if she had not gone she would not have missed her footing upon the clump of frozen snow close to the farther end; the big, young man in the gray ulster would not have assisted her; and she would not have noticed him. She merely bowed and thanked him, and he, after a brief glance at her face, shrouded by the heavy crape, lifted his hat, and turned his back upon her.

As the train carried her uptown, her thoughts centered again on the card. It took on a new and prodding significance. Two things puzzled her: That she should never have spoken of it to her aunt; that to-day, in spite of interruptions and disappointments, she had not at least mentioned it to Mr. Cruith, since

it had been her deliberate intention to do so. Something beside his scientific preciseness and quietude had kept her si-

lent. Then-what?

As she sat with her eyes closed, sheltered by her veil, the illuminating suggestion, felt before, surged over her again. Truths seemed spoken by a wise counselor to her inmost consciousness, and she felt herself forbidden to tell any one of the card. She was made to see that she must not go with her aunt to Mexico, although it must be supposed by every one that she had gone. The address on the card must be her real destination. She had fancied that Great Portland Street was in London, a city familiar to her from several visits. Now she was, somehow, made absolutely sure of it. A phantom picture of the great city's solid, somber beauty under a canopy of sun-shot fog flashed before her. London! The name, big with promise, was in the air, the train throbbed to it. her heart beat to it.

She descended to the street, and walked with a light, happy step toward her home, revolving in her mind the arguments she would use to make her aunt consent to the secret carrying out of this plan. She was so buoyant, so uplifted, she fairly ran up the long flight of steps to her own door, and when it was opened she entered like one rejoicing.

The young man in the gray ulster had descended from the train, too, and followed her to the corner of the street. He stood there until she disappeared. After that he remained standing, a cynical smile upon his lips, until he was joined by a shabby man who had been loitering in a near-by doorway.
"It's all right," said the young man.

"You keep right on."

He turned away, and the shabby man took up a position in another doorway, a little nearer the Lancer house.

CHAPTER III.

A slender figure, dressed in crape, went southward on the train with Mrs. Duncan, en route to Mexico. This was supposed to be Mary Lancer. Several reporters, familiar with the Lancer

scandal, duly reported it so. shrouded figure was Mrs. Duncan's maid. The real Mary Lancer had left New York ten days before, and was at that moment sitting in her lodgings on the parlor floor of a substantial Georgian house in Margaret Street, London.

She was at a big, drop-leaved table, and writing in a soft-leaved book. When the clock struck four she laid down her pen, and read over what she had writ-

ten:

"Well, I am really here in London, under a false name-Miriam Lowerydressed in colors, and with a false history all ready on my tongue's end should any one seek to know me. Not much danger of that. I am alone, and likely to be left alone. Solitude draws a chill circle about one in this gigantic city. And so, as my thoughts kept grinding into me, I determined to write down some of the things that have happened. It will be like telling them to a confidant.

"First of all, then: I had a fright on the ship. I had kept in my room most of the time, but the night before we reached Liverpool-a starless night, with a high gale blowing-I was standing on the top deck, and in a dark cor-The lower deck was absolutely black, but suddenly a picture blazed out of it: A sailor, crossing with a lantern, had held it up to the face of a passenger who had called to him that he might light his pipe. The glare from the flaming wick against the solid, pitchy gloom showed every detail of the bent face. recognized it instantly—the face of the young man who had saved me from slipping on the elevated road in New York! I had felt then that I was to see him again. Here he was!

"He looks a typical college man, and is very handsome in a dark, foreign style, his features keenly cut. there's a defiance in the face-something mocking and reckless. I asked myself if chance alone had sent him on that ship. I believe now that he was there because he knew I was.

"When we landed at Liverpool, and while the luggage was being examined, I watched for him, but he was not to be seen anywhere. Neither did I see him

at Charing Cross Station. I came on to these lodgings that I had engaged ahead, remembering them from my last visit, and seeing by the map that they were only around the corner from Great

Portland Street.

"All this time I could not dismiss the thought of the man whose face I had seen in the lantern's flare. A curious knowledge comes to me-how I do not know !- that this stranger, and the card I found, and the hoarse voice heard late at night, and the vanished treasure, and my father's silent lips are all like beads hung on one string.

"This feeling was with me when, scarcely an hour after my trunks were deposited in my lodgings, I set out for Great Portland Street. I walked slowly, looking at every name on doorplates and house fronts, and at last I came to a dead stop when, on the opposite side of the street, I saw on a faded, swing-

ing sign the words:

'S. Peacock. Dealer In Antiques,

Curios, Jewels, etc.'

"I passed on, crossed to the other side, and came back to the shop. The window was not large, and quite murky, but I could see that its contents were of the best-rare bits of furniture in satinwood and marquetry, old silver, Wedgwood and Bristol china, dangling lengths of yellow, ancient lace. peered through the glass, my head at several angles, but the shop looked dark and empty. As I made up my mind to enter I became aware that my teeth were locked fast, and a chill like a ripple of icy water was going over my flesh. However, although I trembled, I turned the knob and stepped in.

"The place had a curious smell. Age was in it as if from very old rose leaves and ancient stuffs, and this was mixed with the sharpness of varnish and beeswax. Dust lay on everything. Many wood and old metal gave back murky reflections of the shop's jumbled contents. I waited. There was no step, no suggestion of a presence. When a voice sounded quite near me-an oily, quavering, yet peevish voice-I jolted against a chair, almost knocking it over.

"'Well, my dear?' were the words.

"I followed the sound, and it led me to peer back of a huge bookcase. The other side of this was a secretary, and at its dropped leaf an old woman was seated. She seemed ninety, yet she was rouged and penciled. A faded, purple silk gown, made like those we see in old photographs of the sixties, bulged like a balloon around her, the front of which was a mass of grease stains. Her hands were yellowed, palsied, and soiled, but fiery with big diamonds. She was counting sovereigns into a small canvas bag beside her. She looked like an ancient priestess of sin pocketing the price of a

"'Well, my dear,' she said faintly, 'don't gape at me. What do you want?' "'I was told,' I said, with an effort,

'to find S. Peacock-

"'I'm Sarah Peacock. Buy or sell?"

she asked.

"Her breath came in asthmatic gasps. She seemed very ill. Between the words. her fingers fluttered over her heart.

"'Buy,' I said. 'May I look around?' "'Not to-day, my dear,' she crooned, 'not to-day. I'm far from well, and I'm expecting an important customer. Come in some morning, and I'll attend to you.'

"I was about to speak when the door opened briskly. The man I distrusted, and who, without doubt, was keeping me in sight, entered. His very dark eyes literally swam in light as he shot a sharp glance from me to the old woman, and then gave a rapid, circular look about the place. He must be the customer. Not only was he on my trackhe and Sarah Peacock must have business dealings.

"The thought made my heart beat so frantically I thought of nothing but getting out of the place. I brushed past him, and hurried into the street.

"After I reached home I sat stunned mirrors in curious frames of carved for a long time. I felt sorry I had shown my surprise, perhaps fear, to this man. Calmer thought made me realize that heretofore he supposed I had not recognized him, because at the first meeting in New York my veil had been so thick; and he had not been aware of my having seen him on the

ship. Now, perhaps, I had put him on

his guard.

"I sat helpless. What ought I do? Seek advice? Lay the case before a good detective? No, not yet. A practical man would disdain my ideas, as Mr. Cruith had done. If I had even one solid fact connecting this man and Mrs. Peacock with the crime I would get help from a master mind. Not yet must—"

The writing ended here in a tired scrawl. Mary sat staring at it desolately. A few days later there was another entry:

"I've seen nothing more of the stranger, and I've kept away from Mrs. Peacock's shop. I've a terror of it. But I've discovered through my landlady that this shop, though a small and dirty sort of den, is quite famous. Mrs. Peacock is one of the richest antique dealers in London. She is an eccentric character, who lives alone, without even a servant. She has a brother who appears there at times. He travels the world over, searching for bargains in old furniture, jewels, paintings, etc. Their reputation is somewhat shady.

"After I heard all this, I began to see how the thread of my clew would lead to such a place. If these people were not honest, this shop would be a fitting harbor for the missal case and its contents. Here the stones could be taken from the comb and easily disposed of. Later the case could be sold, and if traced back to Mrs. Peacock she could pose as an innocent who had bought it in ignorance of its history, and be unable to give any information about the people who sold it to her.

"Although I've written these words, I am dazed that I could have such knowledge, and be able to reason out such a tangle—I, who have had so little experience of any sort, and none at all with things of this sort! I can only declare that such knowledge comes to me by some wonderful, transcendental path!

"There are times, nevertheless, when I feel myself a helpless atom in this wilderness of streets. To-day my mission

seems of appalling difficulty—grotesquely impossible to a girl like myself. Loneliness presses upon me like a great stone."

After another day, the following was written:

"I no longer feel lonely. The something that shields and directs me has come close to me again. Human words can describe it only roughly. It's like a wave, hot with sunlight, that lifts me up and puts a glow into my cold heart. It's a white blaze from a consciousness that knows what I cannot know. In my soul I feel that it comes from the somewhere beyond, since I never knew it until my father went away. Yes, it must be this, and I will obey it—follow wherever it draws! I am urged this moment to go out in the streets—to go at once! Where shall I go? I do not know—not now—but I will be shown—"

The line ended here abruptly.

CHAPTER IV.

The March afternoon was waning in a smoky grayness, dotted by disks of early gaslight, when Mary walked to Mrs. Peacock's shop. Without hesitation she opened the door and stepped in. A curious dual condition mastered her. While her perceptions were abnormally sharp, her movements were those of one in the leash of an immaterial lariat. There was an obsessed stare in her eyes.

As before, the shop seemed empty. A search among the furniture convinced her that there was no one in the place. She opened the door of a small room hidden by curtains in the right-hand corner, stepped in, and found it empty, too. When she came out she stood with her head uplifted like one waiting for a Her hesitancy was brief. swept around to the other side of the shop, and saw in the back, quite hidden by the headpiece of a kingly bed, another door. This was open and Mary entered by it, not conscious that her nails were digging into her shut palms, that her jaws were locked.

She came to a standstill here. A

hard shudder went over her, but not enough to break the potency of the will directing her. The disorderly table was strewn with the remains of a luncheon. Mrs. Peacock was sitting alone at it, and at the first glance she seemed dead. Closer scrutiny showed that she was breathing, but senseless from a seizure of some sort. She was hunched sideways, and her eyes were closed.

With automatic hands Mary lifted the drooped head and the stiffened, circling arms. As she arranged her so that her head fell restfully upon the chair's high back, she saw that Mrs. Peacock had been bent over a package that was half wrapped in gray paper; the string was in her fingers; red wax and a seal were before her. The package was clearly directed to: "Robert Partelow, Esquire.

No. 642 Berners Street."

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Under normal circumstances, Mary's subsequent actions would have been brutal. She lifted the package, and, without making any effort to revive Mrs. Peacock, tucked it under her arm, and stepped briskly into the shop. Halfway down the cleared space between the heaped pieces of furniture she was brought to a sudden stop. The man who had so filled her thoughts stood before her, blocking her way. Under the fiery scorn and command of his eyes the spell that had strapped her began to melt like wax. In youth, bigness, and strength he towered over her as she faltered before him, the picture of guilt.

"I was right," he said, in a low, concentrated tone, and with quiet but powerful fingers he took the package from her. "You are the thief. No one else suspected you. Mr. Cruith said the idea was idiotic. But I held to it. I believed your father had killed himself because of financial ruin, but that you and your aunt had stolen the missal case. When word reached me here that you had gone to Mexico with her, the smallest doubt of your being accomplices left me. You are the thief."

Mary looked about, dazed. She was like one awaking after a blow. Her head felt strange. She remembered what had happened, but it was like looking at something miles away. She lifted dull, helpless eyes.

"Will you please look and see-let us be sure?" she said feebly, and

pointed to the package.

The words puzzled him, even as he scornfully loosened the paper, and she saw the glistening, enameled cover of the case. In the same hard, angry way he drew out the amazing comb, whose jewels flashed like eyes in the shop's dust and dusk.

"Pretty hard having to lose it!" he

said savagely.

She did not seem to understand.
"The missal case!" There was frantic joy in the whisper: "Oh, my father!

Oh, my God-I thank-

She sank to her knees, a trembling that he knew could not be counterfeited going over her. While rewrapping the package he gazed at her in stupefaction. The strain seemed likely to overcome her, but a heavy step coming from the room to the right made her lift her head sharply.

"Who could be in there?" she fal-

tered.

"Didn't you know that it has a door leading into the alley?" he demanded, yet feeling sure now, as he watched the bewilderment and fright in her face, that there was something in the situation that he did not understand.

But there was not time to question her further, and so, perhaps, convince himself that the intuition which suddenly blazed her innocence to him was bright with truth. The knowledge was irresistible, and he obeyed it. As if she were a child, he lifted her quickly, and stepped with her behind lengths of old Flemish tapestry that hid an angle.

"Quiet!" he whispered into her ear. They remained rigid, she clinging to

the support of his arm.

They heard the door at the right flung back. Steps that could only be made by large, awkward feet in heavy boots rang on the bare floor, and came uncertainly from one direction and another. After a moment there was a grunt of disapproval.

"Sarah," a voice called angrily—a heavy, coarse voice that slurred the "r"

in the name gutturally. "Sarah! Where are you? What do you mean by-He had evidently reached the back room. There was a horrified, frantic

cry: "Sarah!"

Something that the man behind the curtain found more electrifying than anything that had yet happened—and, in a way, delightfully satisfying-occurred now. Mary, her hands clinging to his shoulder as to a life preserver, brought her white face close to his ear:

"That's the voice—that night—the voice I heard!"

He laid his hand upon her mouth, and they both listened, even their breaths short and secretive. It seemed long before they heard the heavy feet mounting stairs in the back somewhere, and then pounding above their heads.

"He's out of the way," Mary's companion said. "Be quick and quiet. When we get outside keep close to the houses. I've two men out there watching. They'll set the trap for him."

She found herself led out in the sim-There was about it the plest way. amazing ease of actions in a dream. To be bundled into a taxicab, the stranger

beside her, was a dream, too.

"Well, we've nabbed Mrs. Peacock's brother-this old Vanderdecken-and the rest will be easy," he cried, with boyish gayety, as he banged the door. "Now for the name on the package."

He scribbled the address excitedly across his cuff: "Robert Partelow, No. 642 Berners Street." When this was done he turned confidingly to her, and said, in a slow, soft, regretful way:

"The other thing that I must do is very difficult—to ask you to forgive me, Miss Lancer, for what I said to you in the shop. It was a thing I hated to believe of you-but yet, to be honest, I did-and I said so. What a chump I've been, anyway!" he muttered.

"No, it wasn't surprising that you should suspect me, although that thought had never occurred to me,"

Mary replied.

"You see," he said, with a perplexed air, "you seemed to know where the case was-

"And you found me leaving the shop

with it!" she said triumphantly. "There is an explanation," she continued, her voice sinking to softness. "I can't speak of it now. It's too sacred." She held out her hand. "I don't blame you. Detectives can only reason from appearances. That's what you did."

He seemed about to speak earnestly, and with an impuisive friendliness, but the jar of the cab against the curb before her lodgings in Margaret Street sent his thoughts into another channel.

"As soon as you get inside, Miss Lancer, put the case in your trunk and lock it. To-morrow we'll put it in the bank. Don't be nervous about it tonight, for I'll have several men watching your house. Vanderdecken is already nabbed, and I'm off now for his partner. As Vanderdecken represents one of the voices you heard, this Partelow may mean the other. Perhaps,' he said, as he unlatched the door for her, "you'll let me stop in on my return? I may be able to tell you something of interest."

Mary looked up at him gratefully as she hugged the precious package to her

"Oh, do come, please. If you knew how nervous I am! Although I look composed, I can hardly keep from crying. I know everything's coming out all right—but—I'm all on edge from the hour in that terrible shop."

"No wonder," he said, in a warm voice, and looked at her as if she were

a tired, troubled child.

"Besides," she said wistfully, "we have still to find out just how the crime could have happened. It must be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that my father was not, in the slightest way, the tool or accomplice of those

men. Oh, yes-do come!"

She held out her hand again, and winced as he gave the small, fragile thing a bearlike crunch. Before the door closed she saw him look back with a flashing smile, and then, with one of two men who had been lounging opposite the house, saw him climb into the cab, which buzzed off with a blast that to her ears had the resonance of tri-

CHAPTER V.

In the back room of a lodging house on Berners Street, whose façade and what could be glimpsed of its interior were gray and lean with the wilting touch of penury, a man, visibly uneasy, was waiting. He paced the small space between door and window with an impetuosity that was like shut-in steam hissing against its confines. His clothes were as dingy as the room. His hair was matted. The growth of immature, straggling beard made his face gray, as if with a lair of dust.

At every sound, often at a fancied sound, a trembling would go through him that would bend him like a windswept bough, and then leave him as rigid as iron, except for hard, difficult breaths. When the cheap clock on the mantel twanged out seven strokes, he leaned across the table, his shoulders hunched, his face ghastly.

"Something is wrong," he said aloud.
"Two hours late. I can't endure it.
It's too horrible. He won't come now
—he won't——"

Through the house, even to the back room, the sounds from the streets penetrated faintly. He could have sworn he had heard the unmistakable sound of a cab's door closing. With an agility that had its impetus in mortal fear, he reached the door, and pressed his ear to the fissure left by the cramping of the wood. At the same time his fingers slid a heavy bolt into the socket.

If the cab had stopped at the house, and it heralded the arrival of the man he awaited, the street door, he knew, would be opened with a key, the steps down the hall would be heavy, a hoarse voice with a guttural accent would whisper through the line of space: "Partelow?" If it were not—— He could not follow the thought. The chaos it evoked was beyond words, and unendurable.

He heard the bell ring. Now listening with an eagerness that had doom and despair in it, he heard the slatternly step of the landlady, the opening of the door, the subdued voices of men. He stepped back, and, supporting himself with his palms on the table, waited. A knock came. Again he waited. The voice with the guttural accent slurring the "r's" did not come through the fissure, calling his name—and no one else in London had known his address. The knock came again.

"Mr. Partelow," he heard the landlady say, "are you in? It's some one to see you."

He reached across the table for a small blue bottle that stood among the odds and ends of writing paraphernalia, opened it fumblingly, lifted it to his lips, give a moan and a shudder, and fell back with a twisting movement across the table, his face staring at the ceiling.

The knock came a third time. The knob was turned. After that there was a silence that had meaning in it, and the meaning showed when two men appeared on the leads outside the murky window. Something glistened like a star in the hands of the foremost one. When he had flung up the window, the winking star became the point of a revolver. Its uselessness was apparent in the first look.

"Cleared out!" he said, over his shoulder, to his companion, and they both stepped in.

The younger man, who had left Mary with such impetuosity to throw the coil of the law around Robert Partelow, stood still just within the window, looking hushed and a little sick. The other, who had slipped the unnecessary revolver into his pocket, went over to the body in its position of grotesque abandon.

"Do you know him?" he asked, looking back at the younger man.

"I do," he said faintly. Yes, he did. In spite of the disguise of the shabby clothes and the straggling beard, and in spite of the poverty of the place, so unlike his accustomed environment, he knew him—a man he had respected; one of the mighty, fallen.

"His name," he said, in a voice of lassitude and distaste, "is James Cruith."

After a light dinner, Mary had sat,

entranced by all she had passed through, her thoughts leaping from the events that had taken place in Mrs. Peacock's shop to the drive back with the detective, to the treasure safe in her trunk, to the delight of cabling her father's innocence to the New York papers. How wonderful it all was! How happy she was! She flung out her arms, and with a joyous, little laugh let her head fall back against the pillows.

But scarcely had she laughed when the tears rushed to her eyes. The work that cleared her father's name was almost done. But it would not bring him back-nothing could do that. thought had anguish in it. But the pain went as quickly as it came; she started forward, her eyes brilliant through a mist. He know, and he was happy! Just as his incomprehensible guidance had touched her before, so in the same, awesome way an incomprehensible wave of unearthly bliss went over her soul now, carrying its message. It was as if sunlight and the sea had come rollicking into the prosaic room, lifting her on a wave to the very sky. She dropped her face into her hands, as if blinded by an overpowering glory. while in some way it was revealed to her that, the work being done, this would be her last transcendent message. Her father knew, and was ecstatically content.

At a few moments before nine the visitor for whom she waited came. When the maid opened the door of her sitting room for him, Mary could only gaze at him in startled questioning. His face was different from her last memory of it, as he had laughed back at her. He seemed older; his skin had a gray look.

"Won't you sit down? You look ill," Mary said, and pushed a chair to

him.

"Thank you. I am done up. You see, I'm new at this." He dropped heavily into the seat. "To find the man dead was one shock. It was a shock upon that to find that I had known him all my life, and had been taught to respect him."

"You knew him?" she whispered, her eyes searching his dull face.

"So did you. Partelow, Vanderdecken's accomplice, was the lawyer, James Cruith."

Mary heard the words, but without taking them clearly into her conscious-

ness.

"That's not possible," she said stu-

pidly.

"He left a confession. You'll soon understand. You see, no one knew your father had the missal case until he had Cruith draw up his will; he mentioned it there, so that in the event of his death its ownership would be clearly understood. Mr. Cruith, as it happens, was in grave difficulties, much as your father was, but from a different reason. He was a secret and heavy gambler. Through selling some valuable curios of his own, he met Vanderdecken. In a moment of temptation he told this fellow of the missal case, and they concocted a scheme for getting hold of it. Cruith showed your father a letter supposed to have been received from Colonel Enderby, and a perfect counterfeit of his writing. This directed the delivery of the case for a month, so that it be put on exhibition for a charity. Your father got the case out of his safe-deposit box. As he left the bank he was thrown, as if by accident, by an accomplice of Vanderdecken, who hoped in the excitement to get away with the valise. Failing this, the other riskier step had to be taken. They went to the house."

"Lawson, the butler, lied then? He did let them in?" Mary murmured, as she sat, a pale listener, scarcely seem-

ing to breathe.

"No. He was absolutely innocent. The plan was simplicity itself. Cruith had written that he would have to come late, and asked your father, for reasons of secrecy, owing to the great value of the treasure he was about to transfer, to keep the butler from knowing anything, and to open the door for him himself, when he was due to arrive. He did arrive, bringing Vanderdecken as a witness. To doubt James Cruith, the immaculate, conservative lawyer, a

man of position, and a personal friend of Colonel Enderby's, never for a second occurred to your father."

"No, it wouldn't. It never occurred to me," Mary said, "and evidently not to you. But—the suicide? My father discovered too late that he'd been tricked?"

He went nearer to her, a look of kindness and protection lighting his tired face.

"You'll be glad to hear that it wasn't suicide. You did not know it, but your father was in the habit of taking small doses of strychnine for his weak heart. Before departing, on the night of the crime, after the case was in Cruith's possession-given to him in the most natural way by your father, with Vanderdecken as a witness-they all had a drink together. Your father took his usual small dose of strychnine with a glass of Madeira. After drinking it, he exclaimed that he found the 'medicine' unusually bitter. Well he might. A pellet of five full grains of the poison had been slipped from Vanderdecken's pocket into the glass. The tray, decanters, etc., were returned to their places in the dining room, all traces of cigars removed; the room was made orderly; they departed as they came.

"Weeks passed. Everything prospered with them. Vanderdecken brought the spoils to London to hide them with his sister, who was a fence de luxe for thieves. They had decided that after a few months they would venture to unset the jewels, and sell them in Amsterdam. But terror en-

tered into the soul of James Cruith when he found that I, instead of following you to Mexico, as I had let every one suppose, had been seen in London, and in the neighborhood of Mrs. Peacock's shop."

"He knew you very well?"

"All my life." A smile that was pleading and conciliatory came into the young man's eyes: "Won't you tell me what put you on the right track?"

She held out the soiled card.
"This first—and—then other things.
I'll tell you some time—I couldn't tonight. You have a practical mind. You
follow only material deductions. You
will find my story hard to believe at
first, but perhaps its very mystery, its
inexplicableness, must convince you of
the existence of wonders too fine to be
judged by our five, puny senses."

She had spoken in a flash and a glow. She paused, and added, in a subdued tone, but impulsively:

"Please let me do something for you? You've done your work so well. My aunt is rich. She will be glad to recompense you, I know. By the way," she added, looking clearly into his eyes, which had grown subtly amused, "who put you on this case?"

"Colonel Enderby. I was with him in Egypt when the news of all this trouble came, and I left at once for New York. You can recompense me," he said, in a tone that thrilled Mary. "Let me be your friend—let's be good friends—for I'm Philip Enderby, the colonel's son, and I think you've been such a bully girl—a regular brick!"







shameless messiness, chronic and unending, if you decide to live in New York; and if you are inclined to be fussy, you had better cleave to the West Side, with its respectability, retinues, and replevins, and never look upon Fourth Avenue's miry face.

At Twenty-seventh Street, the most persistent activity is found in the movements of a brigade of Neapolitan noblemen, who dig at a hole in the asphalt in a contemplative manner, and drink beer from a rusty bucket. Neighbors swear solemnly that this particular branch of the Black Hand has been digging in the same hole for many years, just as their fathers dug before them, and no one will be astonished when their sons take up the work, years hence. The mud lies thick upon the pavement, and, when it rains, skirts and ejaculations, trousers bottoms and oaths are lifted.

It was raining. The subway kiosks gleamed amid the drizzle, and their yellow lights spread in jagged patches over the wet streets. New York was going home for its evening meal, and the narrow walks of the cross streets were filled with hurrying, irritated toilers. Among them walked a slender young woman in black net gown and mushroom hat. Her pace was leisurely and

graceful. She seemed one apart from the dripping, frowning workers, and her chin was slightly elevated, in spite of the gusty showers.

At Fourth Avenue, she hesitated a moment, peering in dismay at the soggy sea of slush and mire. Her boots were slim and shining, and the soles were paper thin. The crowd jostled her roughly as she stood at the end of a long plank, and, with a sigh of resignation, she gathered her skirts, and stepped forward. A man behind her observed the slimness of her ankles.

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In the center of the avenue stood a bedraggled traffic policeman, and his remarks at the moment were all blue, with a fringe of red sparks. An electric truck was having trouble with its steering gear, and the driver was having trouble with the cop. A surface-car motorman leaned from his sheltered vestibule, and bestowed fitting remarks upon the tie-up.

Into the middle of this tangled traffic stepped the slender young woman, and as she reached the tracks the car started forward with the well-known jerk of all New York cars. The girl stepped back, with a little cry, and the motor truck solved its gear trouble, and bore down upon her. She jumped again, and escaped the heavy, rubber-clad wheels; but a frightful casualty happened. The top-heavy mushroom hat broke from its moorings, drifted frantically over her right ear, and plunged, with a sodden plunk, into the mud.

An instant later the bareheaded young woman stood on the sidewalk. The young man who had noticed the slenderness of her ankles stood before her, holding in his hands the fallen hat, and brushing off the mud with a white hand-kerchief.

"Here it is," he began cheerfully. "It's a little bit soiled, but if I hadn't grabbed it you wouldn't have any hat at all."

"Thank you," she said, trying to smile. "It was very good of you to

get it."

"Not at all—not at all. I'd do the same thing for any lady. I can take it into the Chink's laundry, down the block, and he'll scrub it clean in two seconds. Shall I do it?"

The girl hesitated for a moment; she looked ruefully at the muddy hat,

and then nodded.

"I can't wear it that way," she said.
"He won't take long, will he?"

"I'll stand over him with a club. Come along, and have a seat while the foreigner fixes it. You can't wait in

the rain."

He led the way, carrying the once haughty mushroom, and carefully holding his umbrella over the victim. During the short walk, the girl looked at him for an instant. She saw a tall young man, with a rosy complexion, and a blue pair of eyes that seemed to be trying to laugh continually. He was about twenty-two, she decided.

The Chinaman consented to accept the contract, and, during the process of rehabilitation, rescuer and rescued stood before the counter, and made each

other's acquaintance.

"I knew by your accent," he said, "that you were a foreigner; but I wasn't sure which kind. Have you been over

here long?"

"Only a few weeks," she replied graciously. "I've had some trouble with your American managers, over financial matters, and until they are definitely settled, my appearance here will have to be postponed."

"I guess these theatrical people in New York are a pretty bad lot," he laughed. "I don't know much about their ways, because I'm from the West myself. But, of course, I've read about the troubles of actors and managers."

"In England," she continued, glancing casually at the processes at work on her hat, "we do things ever so much better. There a manager is a man of his word. Over here, he is not. I was promised six hundred a week for twenty weeks, ten in New York and ten in your provinces, and when we came to the final arrangements he was beast enough to cut the figure to five hundred. Of course I couldn't stand that sort of thing."

"Of course not," he admitted. "But I don't believe human nature is very much different, no matter where you find it. I've traveled a bit myself, but

I've never been in England."

"You would prefer it," she said smilingly, "unless you are one of those

fanatic Americans."

"I'm not fanatic, I assure you," he replied eagerly. "I've had enough experience, and I've seen enough countries, to realize that the United States is mighty small potatoes. I don't know whether I mentioned it, but my father is the leading flower sharp in this country-knows all about botany and such things. Down in Houston, where we come from, the people take off their hats every time they see the old gent coming. He wears eight or nine pounds of medals from the botanical societies, and he can tell you the age and pedigree of every flower that ever grew anywhere."

"Houston?" she asked.

"It's a little burg down in Texas," he went on lightly. "I happened to be born there, but our family has been on the jump ever since. Did you ever hear of the celebrated Texas Green Carnation?"

The girl shook her head.

"Dad produced it. Mixed up a lot of seeds. It's the only green carnation that ever happened. I'm very fond of flowers myself. You may have noticed the rose I wear. Never go without a rose. I presume it's part of the training I got when I was a kid. Dad tried to get me to go into the scientific side of the flower business, but I couldn't

see it. He's made so much money that I'm trying to keep him from dying rich. He's responsible for the Portuguese Pansy—sells for three dollars apiece."

"You Americans simply roll in money," she laughed. "It's amazing to a stranger where it all comes from. Of course, in England we have our leisure class, but they are the nobility. Over here the coal dealers and successful grocers ride in their own motor cars, and ape the manners of their betters.'

They chatted at length. The hat was cleaned in the course of time, and when they emerged from the lowly laundry

the rain had ceased.

"I've been thinking," he began timidly, "that if you could overlook the informality of the thing, I'd like to take you somewhere to dinner. You've interested me very much with your stories about London, and this is the first time I ever met an English actress. There's a show uptown called 'The World.' I was wondering whether you would care to see it, and tell me how American actors compare with your kind."

The girl looked at him a moment in silence. Then her eyes twinkled, and

she burst into a merry peal.
"You're so funny," she laughed, "so precipitate." She appeared to be giving the proposal serious thought.

"It would be desperately unconventional," she said finally. "What would my friends say if they even dreamed of my doing such an unusual thing?"

"Nobody will ever know about it," he interrupted. "I'm sure you'll be inter-

ested in this new play."

"Very well," she said smilingly. "You may take me to dinner and to the play. The young American meets the English girl by the simple expedient of rescuing her hat. He immediately invites her to dinner and the theater. She accepts. It's perfectly gorgeous, when one thinks how absurd it is. And wouldn't it be shocking to certain prim people I know back home? Dear me!"

She laughed again, and he joined in,

somewhat unenthusiastically.

At dinner he amused her by recounting his travels. She was particularly interested in his stories of Peru. He

had accompanied his father there when that botanical gentleman started in quest of a wonderful white lily with a scarlet pistil.

"We traveled in dad's private car most of the time," he said. "The railways in South America are abomina-

ble."

"A private car is a comfort," she admitted, nibbling daintily at a biscuit tortoni. "The last time I toured England in 'Macbeth,' we traveled in a special coach, and we had a fairly delightful time.'

"You've played in Shakespeare?" he

asked.

She nodded lightly.

"Oh, yes. 'The Merchant of Venice' I found most difficult; but the part I love best is Rosalind, in 'As You Like It.' Are you fond of Shakespeare?"

"I simply dote on Shakespeare, but I've never had the right chance to see his plays. I've been going around too much. Some day I'd like to see you in one of his plays. If you connect over here, I'll certainly have a front seat."

They talked for an hour or more. He explained to her the wonders of the horticultural world, and she enlivened the conversation with stories of London. She described to him the superiority of British manners and customs; the attractiveness of the Strand and Westminster Abbey; the wonderful acting of Beerbohm Tree and Minnie Trask. She took him through the London theaters at a mental gallop, and he leaned back luxuriously, and reveled in her tone and her soft English accent.

During the performance of "The World," later in the evening, he was frankly interested and amused.

girl was politely bored.

"You Americans are crude in your acting," she said, at the end of the second act. "There are a few really good players on this side of the water, but I'm afraid it will take many years before you learn what genuine acting is. Dear old Henry Irving knew so much that you will never know."

After the performance, they walked several blocks down Broadway. She stopped upon a brilliantly lighted corner, and held out her hand.

"I am going to leave you now," she said. "I thank you for a very pleasant evening. I have learned new things about Americans since I met you, and I am very grateful to you."

"You don't mean that I'm to leave you here?" he said, in astonishment. "I can't do that, you know."

"You can, and you must," she replied smilingly. "I'll take the very next trancar that comes. I don't mind riding in them. They're so novel, you know."

"But won't you let me take you to your home—your hotel?" he begged insistently,

She shook her head firmly.

"You've been very nice to me; no, please—please don't insist, and spoil my good opinion of you. You know, in England, a lady's wish is final."

"Very well," he replied dejectedly. "If you won't let me accompany you, you won't. But I'd like to very much."

They shook hands gravely. An uptown car bumped across the tracks, and she hailed it. He helped her aboard, raised his hat, and stood in the street as the car disappeared.

"A remarkably odd girl," he communed, "And a highly interesting one."

An English actor of renown, assisted by a company of British players, had reached the four hundredth performance of a celebrated English melodrama. The theater on Forty-third Street had been packed nightly for over a year. Souvenirs were to be distributed to the audience on the night of the four hundredth anniversary.

The richly dressed spectators filed in slowly between the marble pillars. Chugging motor cars glided up to the curbing, doors opened, and bejeweled, besatined visions of loveliness stepped forth. The six-foot ticket taker, immaculate in evening dress, solemnly took the pasteboards from white-gloved fingers, and tore them in half. Flunkies in purple and shining gold opened swinging doors obsequiously. Tall, dignified girl ushers, in raven-black gowns, conducted the steady stream of arrivals to the proper seats.

Into the center of the genteel maelstrom, a uniformed delivery boy bustled, carrying in his arms a huge bouquet of American Beauty roses, wrapped in silver foil and tissue, and bearing the embossed tag of New York's famous florist.

He forced his way through the throng, and pushed open the doors between the foyer and the rear lobby. Then he stood looking about him expectantly. The flowers were for the leading woman, and were to be cast over the footlights at the end of the first act.

As the messenger halted in perplexity, a girl usher approached him. He turned and faced her.

"Who do you want to see?" she asked.

The messenger started. The features of his ruddy, boyish countenance went through a number of sudden contortions. He began to grin.

"That sentence isn't good grammar," he said, "and it lacks something else. Where'd you drop the English accent you wore last night?"

The usher smiled slowly.

"Kid," she said, without heat, "you got it on me. I'm lashed to the mast, and you can nail my name up for a rummy any time you say. Furthermore, we won't hang any medals on you, either, for getting away with a bluff. If you'll meet me at the end of the show, I'll steer you to the swellest clam-chowder joint west of Third Avenue."

"You're on!" he chuckled. "What do I do with this junk?"







HERE was no one down at the Fall River boat to see Lenora off. She carried her own bag and umbrella aboard the *Priscilla* at six o'clock that Friday

evening, paid for her stateroom, received a key, and was piloted thither with utterly impersonal dispatch in the wake of a uniformed porter. Arrived at the door, she gave the porter a quarter, which he probably needed far less than she did, and dismissed him. Then she went into her cabin, sat down upon the berth, and felt for a handkerchief.

The stateroom was very warm and

stuffy.

Presently Lenora took the handkerchief from her eyes, and drew a long, tired breath.

"What's the use?" she said to herself,

in a choky little whisper.

After all, she was young and healthy. Her tears dried of themselves as she fingered the roses in her belt. They were deep red roses, and there were six of them, quite long-stemmed and very fragrant. They looked like the gift of a lover; but, in drear fact, old Miss Foster, who lived in the second floor front, had given them to Lenora at lunch time, with some kindly little wish for a pleasant week-end. And Lenora had recklessly thrust the whole half dozen through her belt, where they showed to enormous advantage.

She wore a black suit, with a close-

fitting coat, whose lines were inconspicuously good, and a black hat, equally simple. Beneath the hat her fair hair showed a natural wave. Her skin was fresh, and her eyes a clean, cool gray. Her features were strikingly regular. Lenora was beautiful; but she was beautiful in a way to leave you cold. She carried her head like a white lily, and her lips were far too serious.

Her bag, an inexpensive affair of some dark leather, lay on the berth beside her. She opened it when she had settled the roses more loosely, and took out a letter. From the envelope her own name and address looked up at her smugly, typed in purple ink. In a corner of the envelope were the name of a certain magazine and its address. Lenora opened the letter, rereading slowly what she already knew by heart, although the postman had brought it just as she left the boarding house, and she had read it only once in the car coming down to the pier.

The letter said:

My Dear Miss Gunning: I wish we could keep this story. I am sending it back to you with more than the usual regret, perhaps, because it has in it many things which we would be glad to see in the pages of Bruce's. It has vigor and humanity, and the shooting scene in especial is finely dramatic. Your atmosphere, also, is realistic to a degree. But—in this instance a very big but—the love interest, which is practically essential to your plot, is hopelessly weak. The

girl of your story should supply the reason for the man's heroics, and she is inadequate.

Something might be done to her—I am not sure what or how, or that you would wish to do it. But if you could vitalize the emotional phase of the story somehow, we should be glad to have another look at it. I am leaving town this evening for a day or two, but if you care to come into the office Monday afternoon, I should be glad to talk it over with you. Trusting that you will let us see more of your work from time to time, I am, very cordially yours,
WM. A. GAINES.

Lenora's slim white fingers shook upon the refolding of the paper.

It occurred to her poignantly that she had very nearly counted upon the acceptance of that especial manuscript which had been at Bruce's for something over a month and a half.

"Something might be done to her." said Lenora to herself. "'Vitalize the

emotional phase!""

On the heels of this, it must be admitted, Lenora sniffed. Emotion was not her forte. With a flush of excitement creeping into her cheeks, she remembered how carefully in that especial story she had skirted the emotional phase; how she had suppressed the hero's ardor and clipped the heroine's clinging tendrils. The more so because at the very moment of the story's completion had come the incredible adventure-the rosy and golden momentwhich had altered the current of her own dreams, and set them surging upon the warm, white sands of Romance; whereas formerly the bleak and rockbound coast of Ambition had been their only haven.

This is, if you like, an admixture of metaphor. So was Lenora a mixed metaphor-red roses and editorial re-

jections.

She brooded in a silence far from

peaceful.

Obviously one way lay open to her. The story might be rewritten; but at that Lenora shuddered. Equally she had no desire to hear the author of that good-natured letter dissect her fledgling. On the other hand, there was a reminder from the cleaner's it was time for a new hat, and weekly the board bill adorned her plate.

"Life is hard!" sighed Lenora to herself, and slid from that into the one vivid memory which suggested possibilities of softness.

She visualized a smile—kind eyes, narrowed slightly-a full-lipped but well-cut mouth—gray shoulders—a gray felt hat—then a background of devouring wheels, and the long, warning shriek of a motor's siren.

"I might have been killed," mused

Lenora, and shivered.

Then she admonished herself grimly: "He only jerked you back from in front of it. Any man would have done that."

But the dream persisted.

"I'd like to have heard his voice," said Lenora rather wistfully. She fancied it

deep and lazy.

It will be seen that Lenora, while unskilled in the reproduction of emotion, had yet capacities that way. shrank with an exquisite delicacy, it is true, from betraying herself on paper; but, none the less, she had premonitions of the inevitable-storm warnings, so to As she would have repressed speak. in herself any open evidences of the untender passion, so she repressed it in her pen-and-ink people lest they appear shamelessly clad in her secret web of dreams, and soil it in the market place. Lenora's heroes never crushed their ladies to them, because Lenora's pen, blushing blackly, refused to assist at the deed. The most she allowed them was a furtive peck at the fair one's cheek; and over that, before it was consummated, she scratched out three lines, and blotted a fourth.

Lenora was no born scribbler to "turn her grief into copy, with a sob in the throat of it." She should have been raising violets, or teaching in a settle-

At length she got up from her seat somewhat wearily, because the boat had begun to move, and the stateroom was

insufferably warm.

With careless fingers she took a soft, long veil from her bag, and tied it down over her hat. The ends, floating free, annoyed her, so she knotted them up in a bow on one side of her chin. There

was no coquettish impulse behind the act. It was purely a matter of con-

On deck she sat for a while in a sheltered corner, watching the city's wonderful, ragged sky line slip past, and turning over and over in her mind the possibility of altering the rejected

The sunset was very beautiful, a wash of ashen-rose over all the sky, flaming to crimson in the west; but Lenora was not affected by it. She was working out along logical lines the reason for her

failure.

"You can't write," she decided, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes looking absently across the rosy river, "what you haven't experienced. That's plain. I wouldn't try to do a story of the north pole, because I've never been there. So I can't write love stories, because I don't know anything about it.' The conclusion might well have daunted a less practical soul.

"Then what are you going to do?"

cried the inner consciousness.

At that an inspiration came to Lenora out of the warm sky, and the whispering water, and the vast, smoky reaches

of the city.

"When you need material and haven't got it, what do you generally do?" she asked herself bitterly. "I'll go after it, and get it—just as I would any other experience, commercially and practically. If I've got to write love stories to make my living-why, I'll cheapen my soul and write them. What I don't know I can learn."

Then she went down to dinner, becoming suddenly aware that she was hungry; and had a little table quite to herself, and enjoyed it all in spite of her troubles; from the soup, which was really not bad, to the coffee, which, like all coffee north of Louisiana, was execrable, and a dull-brown libel on its

When she went up on deck again, the sunset had faded, and the stars were coming out in a deep, cool sky. Lenora found a chair just around the corner from the bow, and settled herself to think, There were people in chattering

masses farther back; but immediately about her there were three or four chairs unoccupied. She noted the fact with a little furtive sense of pleasure and a fastidious relief. Before her eyes, low on the eastern horizon, chains and clusters of lights went by. She placed them idly for the pleasure parks and homes of summer's refugees. A little farther to the east, a sort of opaque radiance suffusing the sky suggested that the moon lay just beneath

the water's edge.

Lenora leaned back in her chair, and sighed for sheer content. At the sound, a young man, who had come up unobserved, and now sat two chairs removed from her, turned his head alertly. He turned it once or twice again upon equally inconsiderable provocation; but Lenora seemed so patently indifferent to his existence, that he gave up presently and walked away. He did not know that as he went she was reproaching herself sternly for cowardice and a neglected opportunity.

"He would have spoken to you if you had even looked at him. At that rate, you won't get much material." But she answered herself shamefacedly:

know-I just couldn't."

Some five minutes later there came a second knight, sitting this time with but one vacant chair between him and the seeker after knowledge. His interest was also manifest. He was short and square, and under one arm he carried a magazine, whose very name was a guarantee of propriety. In addition, he wore great round spectacles, through which his eyes gleamed upon Lenora with an imploring owlishness. Whenever she turned her head in his direction, she met the beseeching gaze of these spectacles fixed upon her with a question it was impossible to misconstrue. Nothing could have been more eminently respectable, more frankly harmless, and Lenora nerved herself to the encounter.

Deliberately she turned, and deliberately, but with a warm flush sweeping her face in the dark, she rested a casual

look upon the intruder.

In an instant he leaned forward, he

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lifted his hat, and the spectacles besought her. He seemed to swallow hard, then spoke huskily, indicating the empty chair

"May-may I sit there?"

A sudden panic seized upon Lenora. In the moment's confusion, she could not even be sure of what he had said.

"T-thank you, no," she stammered,

and looked fixedly away.

After a moment, the second knight, too, took his departure quite sadly.

"I can't help it," said Lenora stubbornly to her inner consciousness. "It's

no use."

She unfastened another button of her coat, because the roses at her belt were being crushed, and drew a breath of relief. Fortunately her sense of humor was only the rather faint one of the average woman. So she was able to take the situation seriously.

"Neither one of them looked like good copy," she assured herself by way of excuse. "Of course, if they had

only-

At this juncture there was a movement upon her other side, and the third knight sat down without preamble.

He had been sitting a chair farther on, and had only moved to make room for a woman with a baby in her arms. This, however, Lenora did not observe. What did impress itself upon her consciousness was that the third knight was rather a large man, in gray clothes, wearing a stiff straw hat, and that he was smoking a cigarette, which he lit, as she looked at him, from the stump of its predecessor. Although somewhat shadowy, he suggested eminently good copy. Here was no excuse, at least, from that quarter.

Lenora meditated within herself, her eyes on the horizon, where the white flush was momentarily growing brighter, as to how he would begin. While she meditated, the smoke of his cigarette drifted across her face, and invol-

untarily she coughed.

He flung the cigarette overboard at once, and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon-I'm afraid the smoke annoyed you."

"Not at all," Lenora protested polite-

ly. She saw that he was a trifle embarrassed, and it gave her courage to add, with a daring that amazed herself: "I like it."

When he laughed in a lazy, pleasant sort of way, she went on, gathering "Won't you light another, bravery: please?"

"If I may-" he began, then rose and crossed to the chair just beyond Lenora's. "The smoke will be going the other way now," he explained.

Lenora started, and drew back nerv-

"I really didn't mind it before," she

There was a little silence, in which the first coppery rim of the moon lifted itself above the water.

"We're going to have a moon tonight," he commented, with a polite

showing of interest-no more.

"Yes-isn't it nice?" said Lenora. She was remembering in categorical order the editor's objections to her story: "Love interest inadequate," "vitalize the emotional phase." And we may imagine her going valiantly forth with her specimen case upon her arm to collect experiences. Resolution and timidity, in combination, lent a dreamy softness to her voice.

"Does the moon affect you strangely

-in any way?"

"Eh? What d'you mean?" he inquired surprisedly.

He cast a keen, sidewise glance upon the somber figure in black. The roses,

perhaps, gave him his cue.

"Oh, I see!" he added, before she "Sentimental effusions, could speak. and all that. I remember reading once of a man who had himself locked up every full moon for fear of proposing to every girl he met. Something like that?"

"Why, yes," admitted Lenora, quite truthfully; "something like that."

"It does create a kind of romance." said the man lazily: "Look, for instance-coming up like a big, red lantern yonder-out of the dark water. Makes this boat and the people on it look different somehow-less of the You yourself"-he earth earthy.

struck the personal note with an accustomed and impersonal authority-"your dark clothes and the dark veil make a kind of shadow about you; your face is eerie and white in the midst of that shadow, and the smell of those roses offers the last touch of poetry. See what I mean?"

Lenora nodded. It was impossible for feminine nature not to be pleased

with the careless picture.

"You mean it's easy to be attractive

in the dark?'

"And interesting when you say nothing," he supplemented, smiling.

"The moon," said Lenora boldlyhaving taken the plunge, she struck out at once for deep water with all the daring of inexperience-"the moon makes you look weird and shadowy,

"And not the solid thing I am," he said, with a laugh. "Like Tommy, you remember."

Lenora shook her head.

"Not solid, shadowy, with eyes half shut, but very kind, and a humorous

mouth, and a fighting jaw."

She stopped with a gasp. There is no need for describing dreams to third knights who occupy adjacent chairs, however respectfully. She felt suddenly cold.

But the third knight was frankly in-

terested.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed.

He leaned a little forward, with a

"And what would you take me to be

—by the light of the moon?" "A poet," said Lenora; "but a busi-

ness man in the daytime.

"Something like that," he agreed sizzically. "May I make my guess quizzically. about you?"

"I wish you would."

"I can't tell you," he said coolly, "just what you are, because you've never been awake yet."

"What do you mean?" asked Lenora. "If you had, you wouldn't philosophize on the effect of the moon. You'd

"Oh, you mean slushy, emotional stuff," Lenora smiled.

know that it makes men mad."

However, she felt obliged to pause and learn.

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"It shouldn't be slushy, emotional stuff to you," he corrected amusedly. "You're too young. It should be the stuff that dreams are made of. Every road should be a romance, every dawn a vista, every sunset a climax, every man a possibility!" He finished, with a slackening drawl: "Dear me! Dear me! Wherever did you learn your heresy?"

"I said you were a poet," reminded

Lenora.

She drew a long breath, moved somehow as much by the lazy, half-mocking voice as by the words it uttered.

"By moonlight," he reminded her. "Inspiration, eh? Look yonder!"

Well above the horizon now, a great red moon hung staring and unreal. It struck a glittering way across the water, and the stars grew pale before it.

"How lovely!" Lenora's rapt face

grew out of the dark.

Her companion looked at her curiously, a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"I am going to say something impertinent-if I may."

Lenora's recklessness mounted. How else was experience to be achieved? She touched her roses with absent. caressing fingers.

"You may. I should like to hear it." "Then listen!" He leaned back in his chair, eyes narrowed slightly, his rather full-lipped mouth twisting to a smile. Dangling from between his fingers, the ubiquitous cigarette sent up a wavering spiral of faint blue smoke. "Has any one ever told you that you were beautiful?"

"No one," said Lenora stiffly. "You

are very good.'

"Meaning," he corrected, with a flicker of appreciative amusement, "very impertinent. I had your permission, however,'

"What else were you going to say?" "More on the same order. Your profile, as I can see it from here—wouldn't you be more comfortable without the veil?—is almost pure Greek. You don't appear to be over twenty-five---"

"Twenty-four," corrected Lenora, in

spite of herself.

"Ah? Better still! Twenty-four, then. And I judge from the roses, you are human. In spite of all this, yonder is a moon. Here am I, a man—Heaven made me, so let me pass for one—and all you say is: 'How lovely!' In a very delightful voice, I grant you. Still, my dear unknown, how hopelessly inadequate! A modern Galatea!"

His innocent use of that familiar phrase struck Lenora's ear like a pro-

phetic echo.

"What should I say!" she asked re-

sentfully.

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He waved the cigarette with a serene

carelessness.

"There are any number of appropriate remarks. You might begin 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon yon bank!' Or 'Everywhere that moon looks down.' By the way"—he dropped for a moment his whimsical pose, looking at her thoughtfully—"your first remark was quite in the picture. What did you ask me? If the moon affected me strangely, in any way. Now, that was a quaint question."

"I wanted to know," said Lenora. She had taken one of the roses from its fellows, and was brushing it across her face, playing with it tenderly.

"But why?" he persisted. "Couldn't you tell from your own experience?"
"I haven't had any," said Lenora

simply.

"Upon my word, I believe you're tell-

ing the truth," he commented.

He leaned forward, resting one elbow upon the arm of his chair, and looked at her rather seriously. For some unaccountable reason Lenora grew embarrassed beneath his gaze. Her cheeks burned.

"You are very rude," she suggested

calmly, however.

He begged her pardon at once.

"But you don't realize, probably, what a rara avis you are—a young lady of your years, who isn't completely accomplished in the Great Game. I've known a good many women in my time—but, may I ask where you have been?"

"In New York." She answered him

quite literally.
"And yet"—he shook his head—"the men of New York aren't asleep. I don't

understand it."

"I don't see," remarked Lenora, a trifle impatiently, "why you need to understand." That the experiment should turn about and study her was no part of her intention.

"You interest me," he explained whimsically. "I expected to be bored to-night. This is generally a stupid trip for me. Instead of which I meet a Galatea in a black gown—with roses; who wants to know—who honestly wants to know, mind you!—the effect of moon man. I tell you, Romance is not dead!"

Lenora flushed, still playing with her

flower

"And you haven't told me vet."

"How can I?" he protested. "How would you understand me?"

A curious note came into the quizzical drawl. He was not looking at her now, but off to where the moon, grown smaller and more golden, swam up the sky.

"Suppose I said to you: 'There's magic yonder! There's an enchantment that makes the blood run faster—there's romance and midsummer madness—all manner of spells!' What would you think of me? Crazy, most likely. Still, it's true. Laugh if you like. I've come to forty year—well, thirty-five—and I know. If you could see in the heart of that moon what I see—"

"What do you see?" asked Lenora, a little breathlessly. A strange excite-

ment possessed her.

"It's a face," he said, half to himself.
"A girl's face. I never saw it but once, and I've seen a good many faces in my lifetime; but somehow I don't seem to forget it. There was an innocence about it—a sort of cool, fresh sweetness. I don't quite know how to describe it. You've seen a La France in the bud? Well, something like that." He added irrelevantly: "She had gray eyes, I think."

Lenora was suddenly conscious of an indifferent world, and a large personal

loneliness.

"Was it long ago you knew her?" she asked enviously.

"I never knew her at all," said the third knight.

He laughed shortly. "Just a face in the crowd, a will-o'the-wisp in the dark. I crossed the street beside her one day, that was all. She stepped in front of a motor, and I jerked her back. She looked at me once, said thank you, and fled. She probably thought me an officious ass. But her face stays with me, somehow. That's life. See what you want—and lose it. I've never been much of a cava-Pretty things, women; but I haven't had time for them. Now that I might begin to consider myself immune, the Unknown Goddess happens alongknow that thing of Kipling's?-and her passing creates a vacuum in my existence. Which Nature justly abhors. No fool like an old fool. I'm boring you?"

"No," said Lenora carefully, by reason of choking pulses. "No-you're

not boring me.

She clasped her hands tightly together, and adjured herself to be sane in the face of this apparent miracle.

"You see," he said, "the moon has made me talk. There's one effect for

"Tell me," said Lenora, with her heart in her throat, "tell me some more about the-Unknown Goddess."

"There's nothing to tell." he assured "It's one of those things that might be the center of a man's life, but remains an incident by sheer perversity of Fate."

"You-you believe in Fate?" said

"What is to be will be," he answered slowly; "and what was to be has been. Also—the Moving Finger is still on its job-if you'll permit the vernacular. Yes, I believe in Fate. It may be variously spelled, however."

Lenora sat far back within the shadow, and held herself steady. She spoke softly, as not to startle a dream:

"I said you were a poet."

"So will you be when you are once awake."

"How do you know?"

"By your voice," he reasoned coolly now; "and by your eyes, and by the way you handle that flower.'

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She snatched it hastily away from her

face, and he laughed.

"It's cool to the lips, isn't it? man who gave them to you-

Lenora interrupted him with a tremu-

lous honesty.

"No man gave them to me. It was an old lady, whose letters I write some-

times.'

"So?" he said. "That's not as it should be. Old ladies are well enough later along. While you're young you've a right to romance, and red roses, and delightful unhappiness. You've a right to the grand passion and the deathless pain. Neither endures till you're tired of it. You can't put youth away in moth balls; and love won't keep, even on ice. Nice little sermon I'm preaching, eh? The text being"-he frowned and sighed—"Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

"Do you think," asked Lenora, "that

I'm missing such a lot?"

The plaintiveness of tone and look brought a sympathetic indulgence to his

"I think," he said gently, "that love's the biggest thing in life, because, with the exception of death, it's the most inevitable. And if you miss the experience of it, you've missed the reason for your existence."

"Even," she argued bravely, "when

there is work?"

"If you were a man, I'd say the work might do-might, mind you. It might fill your life and your time. But for a woman there's just the one inevitable thing. She's forced into it by nature, and art, and the race." He quoted, unsmiling: "'I was one, and the Fates were three."

"You're telling me what I've been

told before," said Lenora.

She gave a moment's hazy thought to the editor, who had sent back her story.

"I'm telling you what's true, that's why. Reason it out for yourself. No, you don't have to reason-you'll feel it.'

Lenora did not answer. Her cheeks

were burning, but her hands were cold. She leaned a little forward out of the shadow, then drew back in a panic of

uncertainty.

"I've been boring you," said her companion regretfully. He overrode her mute gesture of denial. "Yarning about myself like the veriest schoolboy. I beg ten thousand pardons. That is, as I have said, the effect of moon on man. You will have to forgive me."

"I liked it," said Lenora.

The third knight laughed outright.

"Then tell me something about yourself," he said winningly. "You're rather a fascinating riddle out here in the dark. Your voice is delightful; but your face is only a blur. I'm a bit nearsighted—beside the shadow. You're only twenty-four, you said. And no emotional past now? Upon your honor? No hearts under foot?"

"Not even my own," said Lenora,

with a shaky little laugh.

"Ah, that's all wrong!" he objected. "Romance is the thing you want, if you're going to get the most out of living. The top o' the morning—it's worth a lot of chasing. It's even worth wait-

ing for."

"Is it?" asked Lenora, incredibly daring. "Suppose you yourself—I mean—the girl you saw in the street, for instance—is that romance? Is that real to you? Or was it just a pretty story? Suppose you saw her again—do you think—do you think it would make a difference to you?"

"All the difference in all the world," he said, unsmiling. "Pretty story or

not, that is the truth."

He added, after a moment: "Though why I should be telling it to you—"

"I think," said Lenora abruptly, "that

I shall have to be going in."

She stood up, and walked to the railing, where the moonlight fell clearest. Once there, however, her courage deserted her, and she averted her face, staring fixedly out across the water.

The third knight followed.

"I'm sorry," he said pleasantly. "It's early yet. I was just about to ask if I might tell you my name, and found a

friendship. It's been a long time since I've enjoyed an evening so much."

"Tell me first," said Lenora hurriedly, and still without turning, "what street it was that you crossed beside the girl. Somehow I should like——"

"It was Broadway," said the third

knight at once.

"And Twenty-sixth," said Lenora.

"Wasn't it?"

She laughed, with a catch in her throat.

There was a quickening silence, then

There was a quickening silence, then imperative speech.

"Look at me!" said the third knight.
"I—I think I must have been the girl," said Lenora.

"I think you must. Will you please turn around?" said the third knight.

When she still looked away from him, he repeated gently but very insistently: "Please!"

So Lenora turned, and looked at him. She was a little startled by the warmth that swept over his face. An ardent boy looked out of his eyes. In a second something recklessly intimate and sweet had sprung up between them.

real.

"It's you," he said finally. Lenora nodded, crimson. She felt a breathless surge of happiness.

Something incredible, but none the less

"Did you know me?" he demanded.
"Not till you spoke of the street—and that day——"

"You remembered?"

"I remembered," said Lenora honestly.

He closed his hand over hers upon the rail, and Lenora, after the barest, briefest flutter of a struggle, let it lie.

"Fate!" he said slowly. "It's incredible. It's an exquisite impossibility. Things like this don't happen. Are you real—Galatea of the Roses?"

"Yes," said Lenora, "I'm real." Then she added, with an adorable deprecation of his look: "But I'm nothing like so nice as you seem to think."

"Let me find that out for myself," he said. "At least, you remembered. It was something to you, too."

"Something." said Lenora. She clothed the word in shyness.

The third knight laughed happily. His voice took on a ring of unexpected

youth.

"Begin at the beginning," he commanded. "You will tell me your name, and I will tell you mine. Then you will say where I may come to see you, and- When do you get back to town? Monday night we will break bread together at a comfy little restaurant I know. Oh, this is only the beginning! The things we can do together-when Galatea wakes! things I can show you, and the things you can show me!" He broke off into a moment's deep silence. "The gods are good," he said at last simply. hadn't the least hope of ever finding you. May I tell you who I am? My name is Gaines-William Allen Gaines -and I very much hope you like it, because some day-

"William A. Gaines," said Lenora hurriedly. Her eyes widened to a breathless recognition a moment after.

"We're Virginia people," said the third knight. "It's an old name down there. Perhaps you know——"

"Listen!" said Lenora. "Did you ever see anything like this?" She drew her hand away gently, and began in a soft, even voice, like a child reciting a lesson:

"My Dear Miss Gunning: I wish we could keep this story. I am sending it back to you with more than the usual regret, perhaps, because it has in it many things which we would be glad to see in the pages of

Bruce's. It has vigor and humanity, and the shooting scene in especial—"

Mr. Gaines stayed her with an imploring gesture.

"Is that you?" demanded Lenora relentlessly.

"I see myself," said Mr. Gaines, "as others see me."

After a moment, he observed with incredulity:

"You are Miss Gunning?"

"Lenora Gunning."

"A goodish name," he conceded; "but not so good as Gaines, eh?"

They faced each other a moment in poignant silence.

"You said my love interest was weak," accused Lenora, then colored to the roots of her hair.

"We've changed all that," said Mr. Gaines. "In future there shall be no such complaint."

He grew grave very suddenly.

"We're playing around realities. It's past belief all this should have happened as it has. It's more than coincidence. It can mean only one thing. And do you know what that one thing is?"

He closed upon her hand again, and again Lenora let it lie. Her world whirled rosily about her ears. Her tremulous lips curved to a smile.

"Hush!" she said, with an unbelievable and delicious audaeity. "This isn't a best-selling thriller. Don't tell me—



IN THY PLACE

I SEARCHED for love within thine eyes' deep maze, And, heartsick, found but friendship's steady gaze; Yet more than I deserved God gave to me, And I am better but for loving thee.

My heart, once small and selfish, to make place And house the love I bore thee, grew apace; And when you left, to tenant it again, I opened it to all my fellow men.

MABEL STEVENS FREER.



XII.—SUGGESTION IN THE HOME



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HE possibility of utilizing the suggestive influence of the mere physical facts of one's surroundings as an aid in the development of the hidden

powers of the larger self, on which stress was laid in the preceding article in connection with the problem of the proper education of the young, is by no means confined to childhood. It is a possibility that is present in all stages of life. For although childhood is unquestionably the period when the human being is most suggestible, all of us at all ages are suggestible in varying degrees, and are unconsciously affected for good or for ill, not merely by the persons with whom we associate, but by the inanimate objects of our daily environment.

So far-reaching, indeed, is the force of environmental suggestion that our intellect, our health, our character may be definitely influenced by even such seemingly trivial matters as the kind of pictures we hang on the walls of our rooms, the kind of furniture we put in our homes, and the kind of clothes we wear.

Proof that suggestibility is a universal trait was convincingly obtained a few years ago by the well-known psychopatholologist, Doctor Boris Sidis, in some of the most interesting experiments ever conducted in an American psychological laboratory. Doctor Sidis' object was twofold. He wished to

ascertain the extent of suggestibility among normal, well-balanced people, and he wished to gain some insight into the psychology and laws of suggestion, in order to be able to turn this knowledge to practical account in the treatment of disease. Altogether, twenty-five persons, most of them graduate students in the psychological department of Harvard University, were tested by a mechanism which Doctor Sidis thus describes:

"A successive series of letters, or of figures, was introduced through a slit in a white screen, each letter or figure being pasted on a separate slip of cardboard, which, in color and position, coincided with the background of the screen. Each experiment consisted of a series of nine slips. Each slip was kept on the background for two or three seconds. The intervals between the slip and its successor was also two or three Time was measured by a seconds. metronome inclosed within a felt box, with a rubber tube passing close to the ear of the experimenter, so that the subjects should not be disturbed by the ticking of the metronome.

"For the same reason, the experimenter and his movements of inserting the slips into the white screen were all carefully hidden by screens. The ring of a bell indicated that the series came to an end, and it also served a signal for the subjects to write down immediately, on paper which they kept ready in their

hands, anything that came into their mind at that particular moment-letters, numerals, words, phrases, et cet-

What Doctor Sidis sought to do was so to arrange the slips exhibited that, without his uttering a word, the man with whom he was experimenting would be impelled to think of and write down a letter or figure which the experimenter selected for him. For this purpose, and also to discover, if possible, what factors in sense impression have the greatest suggestive value, Doctor Sidis exhibited the slips in six different combinations.

In one—the factor of repetition—the letter or numeral to be suggested was shown three times in succession in the middle of the series. In the secondthe factor of frequency-it was shown three times, but not in succession. In the third-the factor of coexistenceit was shown in the middle of the series, but printed three times on a single slip, so that three distinct impressions of it were gained simultaneously. In the fourth—the factor of last impression it was shown only once, at the very end of the series. In the fifth, it was once more shown printed three times on a single slip, but at the end, not in the middle, of the series, thus combining the factor of coexistence with that of last impression. And in the sixth, the factors of frequency and last impression were combined, the selected letter or numeral being repeated at intervals, and also shown at the end of the series.

Now, while Doctor Sidis was careful not to explain to his subjects the nature of the experiments, which totaled more than sixteen hundred, they must quickly have appreciated it, and not unnaturally would resist his attempts to "force" the selected letters and numerals upon them. Despite this, not one of his six combinations in which he presented the slips was without sugges-

tive influence.

In an extraordinarily large number of cases, the thought that "happened" to come into the mind of the subject at the end of each series was precisely

the idea that the experimenter was en-

deavoring to suggest.

Least effective was the factor of coexistence, with only twenty successes out of three hundred experiments; most effective, the conjoined factors of frequency and last impression, the selected letter or figure being written down by the subjects no fewer than one hundred and thirteen times out of one hundred and fifty experiments. Expressed in percentages, in a descending scale, the rate of effective suggestiveness of the various factors was found to be:

Frequency and last impression, 75.2 per cent.; last impression, 63.3 per cent.; frequency, 42.6 per cent.; coexistence and last impression, 18.3 per cent.; repetition, 17.6 per cent.; co-

existence, 6.6 per cent.

The importance of these experiments in the present connection lies in the fact that not only do they bring out clearly the susceptibility of everybody to suggestion, but they also indicate why home surroundings have so great a suggestive influence. For, as they show, frequency and last impression are far and away the most suggestive factors, and these are the very factors to which we are most exposed in the home. No matter what suggestions come to us from the outside world, they cannot compare either in frequency or finality with the suggestiveness of the sense impressions conveyed through contact with the environment of our dwelling places.

Consequently it is only reasonable to expect that we shall find our faculties stimulated or retarded, our health improved or injured, our character strengthened or weakened, in proportion as our home environment radiates helpful or hurtful suggestions, which, although they may not be consciously appreciated by us, are subconsciously apprehended, and eventually effect our conscious as well as our subconscious

life.

A host of observations confirmatory of this have been accumulated within recent years by educators, physicians, psychologists, and other skilled investigators. Often, as was stated above, most remarkable effects result from the

suggestive influence of environmental details seemingly so trivial that most people give them scarcely any thought. Thus, Doctor Louis Waldstein, one of the ablest of psychologically trained

physicians, reports:

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"The refined tastes and joyous dispositions of the older children in a family with whom I often came in contact was a matter of some surprise to me, as I could not account for the common trait among them by the position or special characteristics of the parents; they were in the humblest position socially, and all but poor. My first visit to their modest home furnished me with the natural solution, and gave

me much food for reflection.

"The children—there were six—occupied two rooms, into which the sunlight was pouring as I entered: the remaining rooms of the apartment were sunless for the greater part of the day; the color and design of the cheap wall paper were cheerful and unobtrusive: bits of carpet, the table cover, and the coverlets on the beds were all in harmony, and of quiet design, in nearly the elementary colors; everything in these poor rooms of poor people had been chosen with the truest judgment for æsthetic effect, and yet the mother seemed surprised that I could make so much of what seemed to her so simple a matter."

I have myself repeatedly observed instances of a similar sort. Some years since, I received word that a friend living in a distant city had been stricken with an incurable malady of a most distressing nature. Knowing him as I did, I feared that he would be completely overwhelmed by his terrible affliction, and that, although the disease which had attacked him usually progressed very slowly, it would in his case soon result fatally. To my surprise, I later learned that, after a year's leave of absence, he had returned to work, was at his office every day, and was bearing

As I had never had reason to credit

him with much mental stamina, this puzzled me exceedingly. But the mystery was solved when I had an oppor-

tunity of visiting him in his home. I found that his wife, whom he had married only a short time before the onset of his trouble, was a woman who, without any scientific training whatever, possessed an intuitive insight into the psychological significance of environment, and had arranged every detail in the furnishings of their house with a view to create an atmosphere of comfort, contentment, and well-being.

The wall papers, the woodwork, the floor coverings, the tables and chairs harmonized perfectly in color and design. There were no discordant effects, there was nothing that could convey depressing, nerve-straining suggestions. Especial care had been bestowed on the family living room, where the restful tones of the paper and wainscoting, the simplicity of the plain, but most comfortable, mission furniture, the arrangement of the lights, and the presence within easy reach of readable books and magazines, made the room a living room in the truest sense, and banished all thoughts of worry and anxiety. Besides this, the mistress of the house herself, always attractively dressed, always scrupulously cheerful and hopeful in manner and conversation, brought to bear daily upon her husband still stronger suggestions of a stimulating character.

In fact, I found that, notwithstanding the crushing physical disability under which he suffered in consequence of his disease, he had grown psychically into a larger man than he was in the days when I had been intimately acquainted with him. Such, too, was the impression made on all his friends. Everybody who spoke of him to me during my sojourn in his home city spoke in terms of the warmest admiration for his courage and cheerfulness in the face of his great misfortune. With all they said, I agreed; but in my heart I gave most credit to the brave little wife, who, by her good sense and self-denying effort, had constructed for him exactly the environment best fitted to assist him in drawing upon the reserves of his "latent energy," and more truly actualizing the possibilities of his

larger self than he had ever done when

in perfect health.

Again, during a summer spent in the Catskills, I was disagreeably impressed by the uniform pessimism, narrowness, and even hardness of the people of the region I was visiting. This I attributed in large measure to the difficulty they experienced in wresting a living from the soil, which, thereabouts, was exceptionally barren and stony. As one farmer said to me: "The only crop we are sure of is rocks. They sprout fast enough after the winter frosts." And, in truth, the clearing of the ground seemed to be a never-ending task.

But one day I met a family, consisting of an elderly widow and two grown sons, whose characteristics were in such pleasant contrast with the characteristics of their neighbors that I immediately became interested in them. Instead of saluting one with a surly, grudging "Good day!" they invariably had a cheery smile and word of greeting, were mentally alert, and were ob-

viously happy and contented.

"These people," thought I, "cannot be natives. Or, if they are, fortune must have favored them with an un-

commonly good farm."

I was mistaken in both respects. Not only were they "natives," but in all their lives they had seldom journeyed out of sight of the mountains, and then only for a day or two at a time; and, as to their farm, it was, if anything, below

the average.

What made them so different from those around them was the fact, as personal investigation convinced me, that they had managed to create, through their home life and surroundings, most effective "counter suggestions" to the depressing suggestions of the general environment. Their house was a plain frame structure, quite unpretentious. But instead of being situated in a hollow, or massed about by darkening trees and bushes, it stood on the brow of a hill, overlooking a little valley; and, since it faced southwest, was exposed nearly all day to the invigorating influence of God's sunshine. There were trees about the house, to be sure, but

no more than necessary to relieve it of any suggestion of bleakness, and afford a cooling shade from the heat of the summer months. Between house and road stretched a verdant bit of lawn, bordered by an old-fashioned flower garden, and having as a background a light growth of vine running up the posts and along the roof of the

front porch.

Indoors, the furnishings, though cheap, were well chosen and well arranged. I noted with satisfaction the absence of any "best room" of the type so common in farm dwellings, with its heavily upholstered sofa and chairs, its floral emblems in glass cases, its framed mottoes, and its general morguelike air. All the rooms were clean, neat, bright, and cheerful looking. What pictures and ornaments they boasted had been selected with good taste. In such a house it would have been strange had the inmates not been able to rise superior to the cares and frets of the daily grind.

On the other hand, it is a common experience to find persons, even in the best of circumstances, from a pecuniary point of view, really suffering as a result of a badly arranged environment. I have no hesitation in declaring that there are thousands of "nervous invalids" whose health could be restored by the simple expedient of changing the furnishings of their homes. Like the victims of the more serious maladies described in the article on the law of dissociation, these invalids are in more or less of a dissociated state, and are temperamentally of a type to respond most fully to whatever suggestions they receive through sense impressions. Hence their responsiveness to the adverse influence of their faulty environment, and hence the extreme importance of correcting this as the first and principal step in the process of bringing them back to health.

In one case that may be cited as representative of many, a lady visited a physician to be treated for excessive nervousness. She was manifestly unstrung, looked haggard and pale, and complained of suffering from chronic

insomnia and indigestion. A medical examination revealed no organic trouble, and the patient declared that she had had no cause for worry, had never experienced a grief or shock of any kind, and was utterly at a loss to account for her condition. Thinking that a change of scene might be beneficial, the physician advised her to take an ocean voyage, which she did, returning much improved. But within a few weeks she was again at his office seeking treatment.

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Soon afterward, he was called to see her in her home, a sumptuously furnished apartment. On his arrival, he was shown into a reception room, heavily curtained, richly decorated, and provided with a superfluity of small tables, quaintly carved chairs, and ornamental bric-a-brac. There was scarcely room for one to turn around without hitting against something. The same ornateness and profusion were evident in her bedroom.

"Madam," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, yet gravely, after he had asked her a few professional questions, "I really think that what you require is not the aid of a physician, but the services of an expert house furnisher.

"Here you are, living in a great city, where the ever-changing sights and the never-ceasing sounds of the street act as a tax on the nervous system, and carry with them suggestions of unrest, haste, anxiety. What you ought to do—what all city dwellers ought to do, and especially those who live in apartments—is to furnish your home in such a way that the impressions it makes on you will form, so to speak, an antidote to the nerve-racking impressions of the outside environment of the city.

"You ought, above all things, to try and obtain from your home surroundings suggestions of freedom, and comfort, and ease. Large as your apartment is, it is comparatively small, and therefore should have no unnecessary furniture, so that it may appear as spacious as possible. Yet—you will pardon me for speaking frankly—I observe that it is crowded with all manner of things, to such an extent that I am not

astonished that you find yourself nervous and ill at ease. Those heavy draperies, too, and those highly colored rugs, should be abolished. Sell them or give them away, get rid of some of your tables, and chairs, and useless ornaments, repaper your walls in more restful tints, and I think I can promise you that your nervousness will not be long in disappearing."

It was good, if radical, advice, and was justified by the outcome. Of a similar order was the experience of another doctor, who was greatly perplexed by the frequency of minor nervous ailments in a family of his clientele. There were no hereditary defects, and in no case did the troubles of which they complained—headaches, nervous indigestion, et cetera—involve any grave disorder. But the situation worried him until, during a visit to their house, he hit upon what he fancied might be the correct explanation.

"I notice," said he, "that you have a great deal of red in your wall papers, your upholstery, and your sofa cushions."

"Yes," replied the mother of the family, "it is a color of which all of us are fond."

"Well," the physician said, "I really think that you are altogether too fond of it. Too much red has a bad effect on the nerves. If I were you, I would call in the paper hangers and upholsterers, and give them directions to modify the color scheme, which at present is entirely too vivid. Meantime, take the children to the country. It will do both them and you good."

Finding that he spoke with entire seriousness, his suggestion as to the redecorating of the house was carried into effect, and there followed marked improvement in the health of every member of the family.

That colors have a profound psychological effect on human beings is a fact that should be emphasized. Used in small quantities, either in the clothing or in household decoration, the color red, for instance, is most stimulating, both in the way of helping to overcome depression, and quickening the intel-

lectual processes. But when used in any amount it tends to overstimulation, with resultant nerve strain. According to a leading English authority who has made a careful study of the psychology of colors, there are some people so constituted that they become violently excited, fall into convulsions, or faint, if obliged even for a short time to look

at anything vividly red.

The same effect has been noted from yellow. In one instance, the case of a man operated on at the age of thirty for congenital cataract, it is recorded that "the first time he saw yellow, he became so sick that he thought he would vomit." And that yellow has a nervestimulating effect fully comparable with that of red is curiously evidenced by the statement of a friend of mine, a shrewd observer, who says:

"Whenever the day is overcast, or I have to do a piece of work calling for unusual mental exertion, I always wear a red or yellow necktie. I find that either color has a beneficial effect on

my thinking apparatus."

On the other hand, the color violet appears to have a deadening quality. Another acquaintance, a member of the Harvard professional staff, and a prominent psychologist, assures me that the sight of anything violet almost nauseates him, and gives rise to a most depressed feeling. In his case, however, it may perhaps be that the color is associated with some unpleasant occurrence in his earlier life, and that the nausea and depression are merely symbolical manifestations of the presence in his subconsciousness of some memory of this occurrence, concerning which he has no conscious recollection. Readers of the previous articles in this series will readily understand how such a condition could be brought about.

Of more significance is the fact that violet rays are often used in insane asy-

lums to quiet obstreperous patients, and that the alienist, Osburne, after many years' experience, testifies that "in the absence of structural disease, violet light—for from three to six hours—is most useful in the treatment of excitement, sleeplessness, and acute mania."

Prolonged exposure to the violet rays, however, may be highly injurious in point of dulling the intellect, a fact which would seem to be known to the authorities of a certain Russian prison, where, it is said, the more intelligent among the political prisoners are at frequent intervals confined in cells with violet-colored windowpanes, with the object of rendering them less capable of intriguing against the government after their release.

Altogether, there is warrant for the assertion that red, yellow, and violet are colors that should not be used overmuch, either in one's apparel or in the decorating of one's home. Blue, green, gray, and brown, on the contrary, have psychological qualities that make them desirable for decorative purposes.

Care must always be exercised, though, to work out a color scheme that harmonizes, since discordant color effects inevitably carry to the mind suggestions of discordant thinking, and feeling, and doing. As-a first aid to the study of color harmony—a subject which, as soon as its vital significance to human welfare is more generally recognized, will be taught far more systematically than at present-I recommend painstaking observation of the color schemes developed by master artists, as shown in the paintings to be seen in the art museums of our cities: or, better still, excursions into the country, where, in the color combinations of earth and sky, tree and water, mountainside and valley meadow, one can gain invaluable hints from that greatest of artists, Nature.





ELLIOTT FLOWER

IM STUTT was preparing supper. Alphabet Applegate and I were resting in front of the camp fire, for our exertions in helping Stutt pitch camp

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had wearied us. It is possible, even probable, that Stutt had more reason to be weary than we had, but he was used to it. Anyhow, it was his business to do the cooking, just as it was the pack mule's business to carry the shelter tent and supplies whenever we saw fit to shift camp; and both of them performed their tasks in leisurely fashion, and with the least possible exertion. Neither made a hurried or unnecessary movement.

We had no horses, for we could not use them in our hunting, and we had not started out with the intention of doing much camp shifting. Indeed, this was only our second camp. We had not had much luck at the other. We were after big game, and perhaps the big game had heard of our coming. Anyhow, it was scarce. So we had come a little deeper into the mountain wilderness in search of some, and we were now discussing, with some peevishness, the strange disinclination of game to come up and be shot.

"It's a bally shame," remarked Applegate gloomily. "If Stutt doesn't show us something to shoot very soon, don't you know, I fawncy we'll be justified in shooting him."

"Sure!" snorted Stutt, without looking up from the tiny camp stove. "Try it once, and see who gits to it first!"

"But you're so slow, old chap."

"You never see me when the time come to unlimber quick," interrupted Stutt.

"Anyhow," pursued Applegate, "you set out to show us some big game, and we haven't seen it yet. You cawn't deny that, you know."

"You scared it away," explained

"My word!" exclaimed Applegate. "How?"

"With them huntin' togs you put on the mornin' we was plannin' to start," replied Stutt,

"But you raised such a bally row, don't you know," returned Applegate, "that I took 'em off, and made a silly awss of myself by wearing what you said."

"You took 'em off," agreed Stutt, "but you was too late. Them togs could 'a' been heard twenty mile, and seen most as far—they was so loud and dazzlin'. They was funny enough to make the game die laughin', and it ain't sportsmanlike to joke a b'ar to death."

To my surprise, Applegate made no reply. I glanced at him to learn the reason, and discovered that his eyes, big with amazement, were fixed on some object beyond me. I turned to see what it was, and I imagine my own eyes grew equally large.

There stood a girl who looked as if she might have just stepped out of a hunting scene from a popular novel or a comic opera. She was a fashion-plate huntress, with some modifications and

additions. Her costume, while neat and well fitting, had not the spick-and-span newness of a fashion-plate figure, and the furbelows that a fashionable suit maker might add to such a costume were lacking. On the other hand, she wore a cartridge belt, with sheath-knife attachment, and I do not recall that I ever saw a fashion-plate huntress with a cartridge belt. I presume an attendant is expected to trail along with the cartridges, and possibly do the loading. She carried a small rifle in the crook of her arm, however, just as the fashion-plate huntress always does. As for personal pulchritude, she was slightly above medium height, handsome rather than pretty, of superb figure, and with the grace of movement that bespeaks health and strength.

"Good afternoon," she said, advancing. "I saw your smoke, and thought

I'd investigate."

Applegate and I hastily rose. "What are you after?" she asked. "Bear," answered Applegate.

She frowned, "Won't a panther do?" she queried, "We can spare panthers so much better than bears,"

"But you don't have pawnthers in this bally country," objected Applegate.
"Oh, we don't?" she returned.

"Of course not," asserted Applegate.
"You cawn't, you know. The pawnther is really the leopard of India."

She motioned us to be seated again, with the air of one accustomed to social usages, and also settled herself com-

fortably before the fire.

"Well," she said, "if you happen to run across the cougar of this country, which is also a panther, I guess you won't question his right to the title very much."

"But I'd rawther have a bear," Applegate insisted. "He's bigger, you

know."

"And slower and easier," she added.
"He doesn't jump on you from over-head when you're not looking."

"My word!" exclaimed Applegate.
"Are there really pawnthers here?"

"A few," she answered. "Not many left now, and you're welcome to them all."

"But I don't want them, you know," protested Applegate. "I assure you, Miss—Miss—"

"You may call me Diana," she said.
"I assure you, Miss Diana—"

"Not Miss Diana—just Diana. You know who Diana was, don't you?"

Applegate was rattled—no other word expresses it. This girl had walked into camp, a stranger, and, inside of ten minutes, she had Applegate, usually at ease with women, so perplexed and disconcerted that he hardly knew what to say. I may as well confess that he was not alone in his perplexity.

"Why, I fawncy I do," he replied.
"Well, it pleases me to be Diana just

now," she explained.

"Fawncy that!" commented Applegate helplessly. "Well, Miss-"

"The original Diana," she interrupted, "would put an arrow into you if you called her Miss. I'm Diana."

"But it seems so bally familiar on first acquaintance, don't you know, that I cawn't get used to it," objected Applegate.

"Then," she declared, "Diana must withdraw. She can't afford to be made ridiculous. Miss Diana! Can't you see how absurd it is?"

I looked for a smile, to indicate that she was badgering Applegate; but she

seemed quite serious.

"Well, Diana," he said desperately, "we came for a bit of bear hunting. If we run across a pawnther, don't you know, we'll try to get him, of course; but it's bears we're after."

"Oh, all right," she agreed; "go ahead! I don't mind, although I'd a little rather you went after panthers."

Applegate was staggered now. So was I. We had supposed we were on public land, where anybody with the necessary license could hunt in season, and yet she spoke as if she had some proprietary interest in the country.

"My word!" exclaimed Applegate.
"It cawn't be that you own all this!"

"Certainly not," she returned. "You never heard of Diana owning a forest, did you? But she was mightily interested in having plenty of the right kind of game, wasn't she? That's why I'd

rather you went after panthers. They're just a menace and a nuisance, but bears are real game. Naturally we don't want a lot of strangers coming in here and exterminating the game when we were here first. But that's all right, so far as you are concerned; I guess you won't do much harm."

Applegate ignored this slur, and asked who "we" were.

"Oh, myself principally," she replied, "although there are some others at the cabin."

"Supper!" called Jim Stutt at this moment. "Grub!" was his usual cry, but the presence of Diana evidently made this seem too coarse to him.

Applegate immediately turned from the perplexing problem to the simple one. Would Diana partake of our necessarily simple fare? Diana would be grateful for a cup of tea, if we had it. Think of an Englishman being without tea! Of course we had it. But we learned no more about "the cabin" or "the others," or the girl herself. She merely laughed when Applegate tactfully led up to the subject.

"I'm Diana," she said. "Is not that enough? I feel that I have certain rights here because I am here much and others are here seldom. I am interested in the preservation of the game—for myself and companions. But I have said that you may hunt. Why, I'll take you out to get a bear myself, for you'll need a good guide. What more can you ask?"

Applegate, startled, admitted that he could ask nothing better than her company; but suggested that we already had a guide.

"I said 'a good guide,' " she remarked; whereat, Stutt so far forgot his manners as to snort, and upset a pot of tea, thereby scalding himself. "You're English, of course?" she added.

"Fawncy that!" grumbled Applegate.
"I cawn't see how everybody knows it."
"Oh, that's easy," she laughed. "Just

reverse the situation. You wouldn't call me English, would you?"

"I should be glad to," returned Applegate gallantly.

"Very pretty, Mr.—Mr.—" She paused inquiringly, just as he had done.

Then Applegate rose to the emerency, as he frequently did, and repaid her in her own coin. "You may call me Alphabet," he said.

"What a queer name!" she exclaimed.
"Mr. Alphabet!"

"Not Mr. Alphabet—just Alphabet," he corrected. "I fawncy you know what the alphabet is, and it rawther pleases me to be the alphabet just now. But I cawn't afford to be made ridiculous, you know. Mr. Alphabet! Cawn't you see how absurd it is?"

It was evident that Diana could appreciate a joke that was on herself, for she laughed—not consciously, half-heartedly, but as one laughs when enjoyment is real, not feigned.

"You're the right sort, Alphabet," she said at last, "I like you," she added frankly. "Shall we go after bear in the morning?"

"With pleasure," returned Alphabet. That being settled, she decided that it was time for her to be getting back to the cabin. Applegate was on his feet instantly, prepared to accompany her. She refused to permit it.

"But you cawn't go alone," he protested. "It will be dark before long."

"And then how would you get back?" she asked.

"We'll take Jim Stutt," he urged.
"No," she said decisively. "I can still reach the cabin before dark, and I don't want any one to go with me, or follow me. I'll know if I'm followed. If I am, I will not come again; if not, expect me to-morrow morning. Good night,"

She held out her hand to Applegate, and then turned to Stutt and myself. Applegate hastily introduced us, a formality that had been overlooked in the novelty of the situation. We were presented under our real names, but she was still Diana.

"I've heard of Jim Stutt," she said, as she picked up her rifle, and adjusted her cartridge belt. "He's a good guide, but I know more of this particular locality than he does."

Jim was mollified, but he was also puzzled.

"Who is she?" Applegate and I both demanded as soon as she was gone.

Stutt shook his head. "I never see her before," he said.

"But you must have heard of her, old

chap," urged Applegate.

"No," said Stutt, "she's got me plumb fuddled. I ain't been up this way much in a long time, havin' been guidin' and teamin' some consider'ble far from here.

She's new to me."

"D'ye know, old chap," remarked Applegate, turning to me, "I cawn't make her out at all. Think of her walking in here alone, the way she did, knowing nothing of us at all, don't you know. But you're all so bally puzzling over here," he added hopelessly, "especially your women."

"Huh!" snorted Stutt. "She had us sized up long afore we ever see her, and the way you both got up and bowed settled it. You ain't the kind she'd be afraid of."

"But the hunting, you know," per-

sisted Applegate.

"Oh, she took your measure, all right," returned Stutt. "Don't you worry none about her."

"Most extraordinary!" commented

Applegate.

Still, whatever the explanation, it was a fact that, upon such very brief acquaintance, she had agreed to go after bear with one or both of us. We were uncertain upon the last point. Applegate insisted that I was expected to be one of the party, but I recalled that her conversation had been wholly with Applegate, and her offer made to him.

Besides, I am not very keen for bear. Having lost none, I saw no reason to go in search of any. I am not much of a sportsman, anyway, being up here in the mountains merely because it was my duty to accompany Applegate wherever his vagaries might lead him. So it was finally settled that Applegate was to go with her alone, unless she specifically invited me to accompany them.

Diana appeared early the following morning, and she and Applegate went away together. If surprised that I did not go along, she was wonderfully successful in concealing the fact. If annoyed, she did not show it. In fact, she seemed to think that I was going out with Stutt, and intimated laughingly that we would now see who was the better guide. But Stutt and I were quite content to remain in camp, although I browsed around a little in the immediate vicinity.

A little after noon, Applegate returned alone. He was soaked to the skin, had a nasty bump on the back of his head, and, as I discovered later, some minor bruises on his body. And he was

not in good humor.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "What happened to you?"
"Got wet," he replied tersely.

"But how?" I persisted.

"Fell in the water," he answered. "How d'ye think I'd do it?"

"And Diana?"

"Didn't like the bawth any better than I did," he said, and then added hotly: "What you standing there like a bally fool for? Why don't you help a chap

peel off?"

I asked no more questions until he had been divested of his wet clothing and wrapped in a blanket, there being no extra suit in our camp wardrobe. Stutt hung the wet clothes up in the sun to dry. Applegate was then a little more cheerful, but still far from loquacious or communicative.

"Where's your gun?" I asked.

"I fawney it's still up there," he answered. "I didn't stop to look. You cawn't fish with a gun, you know, so I didn't take it in."

"It looks to me," remarked Stutt solemnly, "like you went into the river."

"Fawncy, now!" commented Applegate approvingly. "What a head he's got!"

"If you did," Stutt went on, "you sure had a bad fall, and I don't see how you got out."

"Don't you, old chap?" returned Ap-

plegate.

"The banks is high all above here," pursued Stutt imperturbably, "the current is swift and swirly, and the rocks is plenty."

"And hard," added Applegate, gently passing his hand over the bandage that now encircled his head. "You cawn't butt them out of the way, you know; you cawn't do it, really."

"But where's Diana?" I asked.

"Where d'ye think a lady would go awfter a bawth in the mountains?" he retorted. "D'ye fawncy she'd come calling on a lot of men? She's at the cabin, as anybody but a silly awss would know."

"And where's that?" I persisted, determined to get some light on the sub-

ject.

"I cawn't say," he answered; but whether he meant that he was not permitted to tell, or didn't know, I could not determine; and immediately afterward he became morose and silent, answering questions only with monosyllables, and altogether acting most strangely for one of his usually calm and cheerful disposition. So we left him to his meditations and his pipe. I knew that I should hear the story of his adventure in time, but it was evidently not to be had now.

He lay where we had left him, smoking moodily, until he decided that his clothes were dry enough to don. They were not, but he insisted upon putting them on, anyway. Then he wandered about aimlessly, now and then making brief incursions into the surrounding forest, still smoking moodily and saying nothing. It was not until we had finished supper, and Stutt was busy cleaning up, that he finally told me what

had happened.

"It's deuced awkward, old chap," he remarked.

"What is?" I asked.

"Why, d'ye know," he explained, "I chawnced to step on a loose bit of rock, and I fawncy it didn't beat me down to the water very much. I went slipping, and sliding, and bounding along, don't you know, turning over and over like a bally tumbler in a show, and I was wrong end up when I got to the river, so I had no chawnce at all."

"You'd have had mighty little chance in that torrent, anyhow," I remarked. "Right-o!" he agreed. "I fawncy I

know that better than you do, for it caught me and spun me like a top, don't you know, and I couldn't get my bally feet on the bottom; so it was swirl, and bump, and swirl like a silly awss, with feet and arms going; and the only thing I saw was Diana looking down from above; and the only thing I heard was: 'Grab something, and I'll get you!' Rawther silly, don't you think, when anybody could see I was reaching for everything in sight! I fawncy I got my hands on forty rocks in ten seconds, but they wouldn't come along, and I jolly well couldn't stop. But at lawst, awfter a nawsty bump, I got wrapped around one, with my head on one side and my feet on the other; and that's where I was, don't you know, with Diana holding me in place, when I got my senses back."

"Diana in that swirling torrent!" I exclaimed. "How did she get to you?"

"Oh, I was hung up a bit out of the worst of the current, where the bank sloped easier," he explained, "and she'd worked her way out from rock to rock, and there she was, old chap, up to her waist in water, and holding me steady against the rock where I was caught. Then, with her help, I got my feet on the bottom, we worked our way back to shore, and awfter resting a bit she left for the cabin—wouldn't let me go with her even then, don't you know—and I came to camp."

It was told quite simply, but the mental picture of the girl taking her life in her hands, and braving that torrent, thrilled me, and there could be no doubt that Applegate was far more deeply affected. Indeed, it was so daring and courageous a thing that, coupled with his own escape from almost certain death, it seemed to have dazed him, and left him troubled and doubtful.

"It was fine! Superb! Amazing!" I declared, with enthusiasm. "Not one girl in a thousand——"

"Make it a million, old chap."

I accepted the correction, and expressed myself further as to her resourcefulness and heroism.

"But I don't see what's so awkward about it," I added.

"Why, she saved my life, you know," he said, as if that explained every-"I hadn't a chawnce without thing. her.

"Well," I admitted, "for the girl to save the man is a reversal of the usual thrilling rescue; but still the awkward-

ness escapes me."

"Oh, I say, now, cawn't you see that?" he returned, in apparent sur-"I fawncied anybody could see prise. that."

"Well, I can't," I said.

Evidently my obtuseness annoyed him, for he got up and walked away. Nor would he say more upon the sub-

ject that evening.

Diana did not put in an appearance the next morning-at least, she had not when Stutt and I started out to see what we could do in the way of getting a bear. Applegate was of the opinion that he had no immediate need of either exercise or excitement, having had enough of both the preceding day, so he elected to remain in camp. He was not there, however, when we returned, bearless, in the afternoon.

I crept under the shelter tent for a nap, being somewhat tired, and believing Stutt fully capable of getting wood for both stove and camp fire unaided. He had done it before, and he had less

need of rest, anyway.

I was awakened by voices, and the very first words of which I was fully conscious made me want to cry out. What I saw, being myself pretty well concealed by tent and blanket, was

equally disquieting.

Applegate was proposing to Dianaactually proposing to a girl he had known less than three days. It was enough to make a fellow in my position tear his hair. Think of being, in a measure, responsible for a youth who was supposed to be looking for an investment, but insisted upon getting into some sort of a feminine entanglement every few minutes! Think of luring him up into the mountains, to keep him out of Cupid's way while awaiting news from London, and then finding him holding the hand of a feminine Nimrod, gazing into her eyes, and asking

her to be his wife! But it was too late for me to disclose my presence now. He was too far along for me to do that without making an awkward and

embarrassing situation.

However, I had to admit to myself that he did it very well—not like a matinée idol, or the hero of one of the "best sellers," but effectively nevertheless. He did not kneel and declare passionately that he could not live without her, but his voice was tremulous when he told her that the life she had saved should be consecrated to her.

And she looked at him rather wonderingly, it seemed to me, making no effort to withdraw her hand. I was conscious of the fact that the situation would have seemed absurd anywhere else, but somehow there is less circumlocution, less hesitation, more directness in the open than in the drawing-room-people seem to get nearer to each other-and a swift sequence of events, even in love-making, does not seem so surprising.

"I believe, Alphabet," she said at last, with a whimsical smile, "that this is an occasion when a girl would be justified in pleading that 'it is so sudden.' Why, I never saw you until day before yesterday, and I don't even know

your name now.

Thereupon, Applegate told her his name, and a good deal about his family connections, which, coupled with his father's wealth, was enough to make such an alliance look very attractive to a mountain maid of any social or financial ambition. If he expected this to make an impression—and he probably did, for the English think much of family—he must have been disappointed, for there was nothing to indicate that she was in the least dazzled. I should say here that there was nothing boastful in his recital; he was apparently merely giving her facts, to which, in view of his proposal, he believed she was entitled.

"And you know nothing of me," she suggested quietly, when he had con-

cluded.

"Of no consequence, in these circumstances," he asserted.

She looked at him doubtfully, curiously, for a moment, and laughed, gently withdrawing her hand at the same

"Oh, it's quite absurd, Alphabet," she declared. "You can't be serious.

"But I am, don't you know!" he insisted. "Cawn't you see that my life belongs to you—and what am I with-out my life?"

That sounded like good reasoning,

but she still laughed.

"If it belongs to me," she said, "I make you custodian of it. See that you are worthy of the trust. Let's talk of something else."

"Oh, very well," he agreed resignedly; and they turned to other topics.

But there was something of restraint and self-consciousness now, and conversation lagged; so Diana presently left, again declining Applegate's escort.

I promptly rolled out from under the tent. Applegate regarded me with in-

different interest.

"You heard?" he queried. I undertook to explain the circumstances, but he checked me. "It's of no consequence," he said.

"But it is!" I insisted. "At least, your course is. Hang it all-are you going to propose to every girl you meet?"

"Oh, I say, now, that isn't fair, old chap," he protested. "Cawn't you see

I had to do it?"

"Had to do it!" I roared. "Why?" "She saved my life," he explained. "It worried me, don't you know. never heard of a rescued maiden, you see, that didn't marry her rescuer-

In books," I put in.

"Yes, old chap," he agreed, "in books, and newspapers, and everywhere-romawnce in real life, you know-so I fawncied the reverse must be the same. But it was rawther awkward, don't you know, for the rescuer couldn't propose in this case—against convention and all that bally rot-so I had to give her the chawnce, in case she wanted me.'

I was overwhelmed. "Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that you proposed

simply on her account?"

"Why, yes, old chap," he returned

"She was entitled to the calmly. chawnce, don't you think?"

It took me a moment or so to fully grasp this amazing point of view. "Then you didn't really want her?"

I suggested.

"No, old chap," he replied. "Ripping fine girl, and all that-good enough for any man, and too good for most—but I didn't really want her." He puffed his pipe meditatively. "I fawncy I do now, though," he added.

"Why?" I asked.

"Don't you always want what you cawn't get?" he returned enigmatically, and yet with something of philosophy in the question. "Even if you didn't want it before?"

"How about Sally Otis?" I ven-

tured.

"Oh, I want her, too," he answered. "Back up!" I cried. "Even Utah bars that sort of thing now."

Stutt, who had been cutting wood for the camp fire, returned now, and sarcastically suggested that he might be running a hotel, but he expected a little help occasionally from his boarders, so we pursued the subject no further.

Diana did not appear the next day, or the next, and we went after bear with Stutt, Applegate having found his gun where he dropped it when he went into the river. We had some luck, for Applegate got a bear; but he seemed to derive little satisfaction from his success. Fle was elated for the moment, of course, but that was all. His mind was busy with other things.

The third day, coming unexpectedly to the edge of a ravine, we discovered Diana on the slope about fifteen feet below us. She was waiting apparently for a shot at something on the other side of the ravine; her whole attitude indicated absorbed attention, and she had eyes and ears for nothing else.

The descent to where she stood was abrupt, almost vertical-a sharp slant of loose earth without vegetation of any kind-but beyond her there was more of a slope, with some grass and bushes, and here and there a stunted tree. A e edge of the ravine, so close that its roots protruded from the slant, was a tree of some size.

Applegate stepped up to this, to get a better view. Stutt tried to stop him, but was too late. Applegate, holding to the tree, leaned forward. The tree, only partly rooted in the loose earth, needed no more than this to topple it over, and it started with that slow, heavy motion that a tree has in the first stages of its fall. Applegate recovered his balance with an effort, but the tree was going slowly, slowly, but surely; and Diana was almost directly in the line of its fall.

Stutt and I stood spellbound: there was nothing that we could do now. Applegate, white of face, glanced up at the tree, and realized the horror of the situation. There was still time for him to step back, and avoid going with the tree, but he stepped over the crumbling edge of the ravine instead. It was a matter of sliding then, straight down to where Diana stood, unconscious of her danger; but the change in the slope there checked his descent slightly-enough to enable him to throw one arm around the startled girl, and take her along with him, rolling and tumbling down the lower slope, but fortunately colliding with nothing sufficient to stop their progress.

The next moment the tree fell, with a mighty crash; but it could not tear its roots entirely loose, so it fell only its own length, and Applegate and Diana were beyond the danger line then. We could see them near the bottom of the ravine, lying quite still for a moment. I confess to a fear that they had both been killed; but the next instant Applegate was up and bending over Diana; then she sat up, and, womanlike, began to smooth down her skirts, and otherwise assure herself that she was still modestly presentable.

Stutt and I lost no time in getting down to them, although we chose an easier descent. They were somewhat bruised as to body, and torn as to raiment, but they had apparently suffered no serious injury.

"It was nothing at all, don't you know," Applegate was explaining. "I

got jolly well used to sliding when I went into the river."

She shook her head soberly.

"You can't pass it off in that light way," she said. "You had the wit to know what to do on the instant, and the nerve to do it. And I made a joke of you at first!"

"Did you now?" returned Apple-

gate, in surprise.

"I did, and I am sorry," she answered contritely. "I'll prove it. You may

go home with me this time.

Stutt and I were included in the invitation, and we were only too glad to go along, for we were anxious for a solution of the mystery that seemed to envelop Diana. Stutt was absorbed in his own reflections most of the way, but he made one remark which clearly indicated the subject of his thoughts.

"You can't tell by the looks of a cat how far she can jump," he remarked to me, "and when it comes to backin' a real man, my money goes down on that

there English dude.

There was a surprise in store for us at the "cabin," for it was not a cabin at all, but a bungalow, and a big one, although very cleverly hidden away in a mountain nook. Furthermore, there were several servants, and I did not have to be told who Diana's father was when I heard his name. He had so much money that he had to put a score of expert accountants at work when he wanted to know how rich he was, and I recalled that he mysteriously disappeared from stock-ticker circles for two or three months every year, to rest his nerves. His wife, I learned, was here occasionally, and now and then he had a friend or two; but these usually found the life too dull to be endured much longer than a week at a time.

We were hospitably asked to remain for supper, and we did so. And here the last scene of the little comedy was enacted. An unintentional eavesdropper again, having been left by Diana's father to entertain myself with a box of cigars and a decanter, in his den, I heard it all, for Applegate and Diana were just outside the shuttered win-

"Alphabet," she said, coming to the point with her usual directness, "I have changed my mind."

"Yes?" he returned innocently.

"Yes," she repeated. "I am now ready to give you another answer."

"My word!" ejaculated Applegate, suddenly realizing what she meant.

She was surprised—naturally.

"What's the matter?" she asked.
"Why—why, you gave me such a jolly start, don't you know," he explained weakly, "that it 'most bowled me over."

"Have you changed your mind, too?"

she questioned.

I

"Oh, no, not at all, I assure you," he

hastened to say.

But I recalled his remark about wanting what you can't get, and knew that he had changed it twice since he had asked her to be his wife. The pendulum had swung over and back, being influenced by her attitude.

"You were quite right in your view," she went on, "and now our positions are reversed. My life belongs to you, and

what am I without life?'

There was a silence. I could not see him, but I imagined he was eying her with something of doubt and suspicion, as I should have done in like circumstances, and his next words confirmed this impression.

"You're jollying me," he said.

"Indeed, I am not," she declared.
"But if—if"—she added, faltering a little—"you don't want——"

"I want more than gratitude in a

wife, don't you know," he interrupted; and, knowing the situation, I had to give him credit for a clever wit.

She did not reply directly to this, and from what followed I infer that he no-

ticed it.

"I tell you," she insisted earnestly, "you are the bravest, coolest, finest, and quickest-witted man I ever knew; and my life is as much yours to-day as yours was mine a few days ago."

"Well," he returned, after another pause, "I make you custodian of it."

It seemed to me that this was a little too sharp a shaft, but I discovered that Applegate, in this matter, at least, was wiser than I. She laughed—heartily, joyously, like one who enjoys a joke.

"Alphabet," she said, "let's drop romance. Somehow, it doesn't seem to work out right either way. But I like you. You're as clever as you are brave.

Let's just be friends."

"Right-o!" agreed Applegate. But a moment later he added doubtfully:

"You were jesting, then?"

"I never was more serious in my life," she asserted earnestly. "It seemed to me the only thing I could do, considering all the circumstances, and I revealed my identity that you might know what..."

"Of no more consequence to me than my family was to you," interrupted Applegate. Then, after a pause: "Fawncy, now, if we had both been serious at the same time!"

"Then it would have been serious,"

laughed Diana.



THE MASK

WITHIN an ancient place of gloom,
With desolation girt and dearth,
From the grim coping of a tomb
Looks down a carven mask of Mirth.

Strange token of an elder day
Above life's brief and troubled tale!
And yet—and yet—ah, who can say
What lies beyond the riven yeil!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE MAN WHO STOLE BERENICE JOHNSON MORTON



ARDON my interrupting, but were you speaking of a cat?" Mrs. Manton Waring put

Mrs. Manton Waring put down the necktie that she was knitting to smile interroga-

tively at her visitor, sitting firmly erect on the other side of the veranda. cause," she hastened to explain, "you called her 'Berenice' and 'poor child' at first; so, naturally, I thought it might be your little girl that was stolen. Oh, not your own little girl, of course, because you're not married. How stupid of me, for if I am a stranger, I've been here long enough to know that! But some one who lived with you, like a child from the workhouse or an orphan niece, perhaps. It must be very annoying to lose a cat that you're fond of, though I've never liked them myself. But you don't mind my being relieved, do you? For, after all, animals are animals-you can't deny that-and may be replaced much more easily than ababy, for instance! I'm sure you agree with me."

Miss Almira Jenks evidently did not, She was regarding Mrs, Waring with a look of disapproving wonder.

"I can never replace Berenice," she rejoined tartly; "and I've yet to see the young one—though I've such a plenty of nephews and nieces living in comfort with their folks that I've had no need to go to the workhouse, as you call it, for them—what could come up to that cat for cuteness. The things she done passes belief, Mis' Waring! Well, that's

all over now." A cloud of gloom smothered the pride in Miss Jenks' voice, "And how I'm ever goin' to get used to livin' without Berenice, goodness only knows! But I thought I ought to come over and tell you, seein' you're what might be called new to Wrenville, so as you could be on your guard against the villain that has stolen Berenice away almost before my very face."

"Oh, you saw him take her, then?"
Mrs. Waring's round eyes darkened
with interest. "Do tell me about it!"

"Well, if I didn't exactly see his action, it was the next thing to it! Yesterday noon when I was weedin' my lettuce bed"-Miss Jenks spoke with the fluency that comes only from frequent repetition of the same narrative-"I happened to look up, sudden like, and there was a strange young fellow standin' right by my side. 'His manner was respectful enough, I suppose; but, now I think of it, I seem to remember that he had one o' them hard, bad faces you read about; and, anyway, his hair was cut terrible short, like a convict's. I was so startled, I tell you, that when he asked me to direct him to the Bulfinch Center road, J guess I answered up pretty sharp. He seemed kind o' huffy, and didn't make no reply, but just turned and walked off; and if I'd a' said what I thought, 'twould have been 'good riddance to bad rubbish'!

"Well, in about five minutes I got up myself, and went into the house. The first thing I done was to set out a saucer o' milk, as usual, for Berenice. She warn't nowheres to be seen; and, thinkin' I'd shut her out, for I remembered she was purrin' and rubbin' against my knees in the lettuce bed just before that tramp came up, I opened the door. I called, and called, but she didn't put in no appearance—and Berenice was always one that was regular with her meals. So I got frightened, and I hunted round thorough in every place I could think of; but, to make a long story short, from then till now I never laid eyes on hide nor hair of Berenice.

"Of course, there ain't no doubt that that tramp took her-who else was there?—and she was a valuable cat, too: part Angora and part long-haired coon from Maine, that would fetch a pretty penny aside from her lovely character. Mis' Waring, I've left her saucer right in its place by the stove, and I mean to fill it every mornin' against her coming back unexpected. That's some comfort to me daytimes; but I don't get much relief nights, starin' awake and conjurin' up what my poor child like as not's sufferin' at the hand of a fiend in human form. Sometimes I think it may be even worse, Mis' Waring, for I imagine I can see her form lavin' cold and stiff at the bottom of some pond, where she's been throwed after all was over!"

Mrs. Waring had resumed her knitting during Miss Jenks' recital; and it must be confessed that her raised eyebrows and the movement of her lips, as they counted refractory stitches, evinced, to say the least, a certain division of interest. Miss Jenks herself seemed aware of this, for she rose abruptly with the last word.

"Well, here I be just where I started," she concluded. "And, of course, I can't expect folks will feel as I do about my loss. "There's no accountin' for tastes,' as the old woman said when she kissed the pig; and from appearances, Mis' Waring, I should presume that your attention was pretty well took up with the fancywork you're doin'." She came nearer, to bend a look of scrutiny through her

glasses. "It's a handsome color, but a kind of queer shape," she remarked dryly. "Seems too long for a wrister, and too tight for a stockin'. What is it, anyway? Looks to me like a pair of horse reins for a child."

Mrs. Waring laughed gayly. She held up the web of scarlet silk for the

other's inspection.

"No; it's meant to be a necktie. I'm making it for Manton. To-morrow's his birthday, and I have to work every minute if I mean to get the thing done. The neck part looks perfectly enormous, doesn't it"—Mrs. Waring was stretching the tie across her lap in the manner of a Procrustes—"if I pull it this way? But if I pull it the other, it wouldn't go round his wrist."

Miss Jenks' interest, however, failed to take fire. "Look's as if 'twould ravel easy," was her only comment, as she moved toward the steps.

Mrs. Waring, suddenly grown conscious of neighborly obligations unfilled, stood up and held out her hand.

"Oh, I do hope that you'll find your cat. And you mustn't think that I'm unsympathetic!" she cried. "I'm sorry if I seemed rude, because I kept on knitting when you were talking: but I never made one of these ties before, and you know what a new stitch is. I want so much to help you! I'll have our garden and stable searched," she added vaguely, "and I'll tell everybody I know. Really, I am sympathetic, for I'm devoted to animals—all my friends will tell you that. I belong to a society that I never can remember the name of; and once I rescued a dog that was lost. So, you see"-she smiled archly -"I may be the very one to find Berenice. Who knows? You'd be pleased with me, then, wouldn't you, Miss Jenks?"

That lady, manifestly mollified, returned Mrs. Waring's grasp with in-

terest.

"There, don't say another word about it," she began reassuringly. "You didn't mean anything, and I presume I was touchy. I'm that beside myself I don't know what I'm doin'. Well, 'every heart has its own sorrow,' as the

sayin' is, and I hadn't ought to expect that folks should suffer as I do, especially those that ain't never known Berenice. But your speakin' to people won't be of no use, Mis' Warin', for, bless your heart, they've heard it already. Guess you ain't had much experience with country life if you don't know how news flies. Wrenville's all upset, and every hour there's new de-

velopments.

"Why, do you know"-Miss Jenks' voice fell to a confidential whisper as she clutched Mrs. Waring's arm-"murderin' my poor cat ain't the only crime that villain's committed, though it's the most heartless. It's been about proved that he took some of Mis' Eli Babcock's wash from her line Wednesday evenin'. Cap'n Stutwell Bangs is pretty sure that he seen him prowlin' round the store, for no good purpose, last night. And Uncle Darius Lull, who lives on the mountain road, is most ready to swear that, from my description, the very same man stopped at his place to ask the way the afternoon he missed his coonskin overcoat that was airin' on the piazza rail, though that was a matter of a fortnight ago.

"Yes, indeed, Mis' Waring," she concluded, as the gate closed behind her, "we've fell on troubled times, as the sayin' is, and it's the duty of us all to warn one another, and to work together against this terrible danger in

our midst."

Mrs. Waring stood for a moment watching Miss Jenks stalk, like a gaunt, village Cassandra, down the elm-lined street. Then she turned and hurried back to the veranda. Somehow the complexion of the day had darkened. The very syringa bushes by the path, only an hour ago just masses of harmless blossom, seemed to have become lurking places for unknown dangers. The veranda itself had lost its air of trustful security in suggested possibilities of evil behind its big chairs and jars of flowers.

Was this, then, the safe and innocent country of her imagination? Mrs. Waring's mind, resting on a realization of windows that would not fasten and lockless doors, denied it absolutely; and, with a rush of relief, she flung her feelings into words for the benefit of her husband, who just then came out of the house.

"Oh, Manton," she cried, "I am so glad you haven't to go to town this week! That queer Miss Jenks has been here to tell me about a suspicious man that's stolen her Berenice, and committed lots of other crimes. Isn't it terrible? He's still at large; and, although I suppose it's perfectly ridiculous in the broad daylight, with the sun shining, right on the main street, too, I'm afraid I do feel rather nervous. Is there any danger, Manton, and have you heard anything about it in the village?"

Waring laughed as he put his arm

about his wife's waist.

"I've heard very little else," he began. "The whole place is in a state of high excitement, for your friend Miss Jenks has not been idle with her tongue. They're cleaning the jail, and talking about getting a new lock in anticipation of the marauder's capture. Old Rumsey, the constable, is patrolling the streets as regularly as his rheumatism will permit; the editor of the Wrenville Voice is preparing an article for to-morrow's issue; and there are signs up in the post office and tacked on the big sycamore in front of the store offering rewards for the apprehension of the kidnaper of Berenice!

"But that doesn't mean that there is the least danger." He hastened to quiet the look of apprehension in his wife's eyes. "You forget that I'm a countryman only one generation removed. I've lived in a village before, and I know just how little it takes to start an excitement. This is the home of my ancestors, remember; and because we live monotonous lives and have nothing like theaters, for instance, for the outlet of our dramatic emotions, we are obliged to rely on such indigenous things as funerals and mysteries for the purpose, you know. Bless your heart. my dear, there's no danger at all, and I believe that when this thing simmers down you will find that the suspicious

stranger was merely a figment of Miss Almira's underfed imagination."

In spite of herself, Mrs. Waring felt relieved, though she clung to a pleas-

antly lingering doubt.

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"I dare say that you're right," she agreed; "but there's no harm in taking proper precautions, like leaving Toby untied in his kennel to-night and having a decent bolt put on the cellar door, I suppose? For, after all, there is a mystery, and you can't get around it. No one knows what has become of Berenice."

"Oh, bother Berenice!" Waring called back. He was lifting a bag of golf clubs from the floor. "Hello! What's this?" His eye had caught a gleam of scarlet on the table.

Mrs. Waring ran quickly to him. "Don't look at it, please!" she protested.

But it was too late, for already Waring held the web of silk in his hand, and she yielded laughingly to the inevitable.

"Really, you're too bad! How dull of me to leave it there! It's a necktie that I'm making for your birthday tomorrow," she confessed; "a perfectly new stitch. I believe you've forgotten you had a birthday-well, it will be your own fault if you're not surprised. How absurd you are! You mustn't laugh at me. Of course, it's not done yet, but I shall finish it if I have to sit up all night. Oh, Manton, wait a moment! What does it matter if you don't get to that stupid club on the stroke of the clock? I want you to do something for me. Stand still, please, and bend down your head. There, like that. Now that you know that you're going to have the necktie, you must let me take some measures. Dear me, I believe your neck grows bigger every day!"

Mrs. Waring's unexpected appearance in a hat and veil at the breakfast table next morning disclosed to the conjugal eye an unmistakable intention of town for the day.

"It's too bad to lose this heavenly weather in the country," she deplored, "but there are certain things that I positively must get, and I think there's

a meeting of my day-nursery board, though I'm not sure, because I always lose postal cards. At any rate, I really need some sort of a change, for I scarcely closed my eyes all night. I don't suppose that you heard, Manton, a very strange noise about two o'clock, exactly like some one dragging a sack of silver across the deck of a ship? I called, but you wouldn't answer, and I suppose then, exhausted as I was, I must have gone to sleep for a moment, though I fully expected to find that we'd lost everything we had, even if it

is plated.

Then at three, Toby was barking furiously. I dare say you didn't hear that, either; but, at least, you will acknowledge that it was lucky I insisted on his being left untied. Otherwise I'm perfectly certain we should have been murdered in our beds! Really, I don't know when I've been so upset, and I think it ridiculous to call the country safe-with only one policeman. I shan't feel the slightest sense of security until that awful man who stole Berenice is caught; and, if it weren't for your birthday party tonight, I believe I'd stay in town, and get you to come up in the afternoon and take me out to dinner somewhere on a roof.

"Mercy! Did the clock strike nine? You mustn't keep me, Manton. You'll make me miss my train. I hear Watson at the door already. I haven't a cent of money. Yes; twenty dollars will be enough, I suppose. And do you mind—you'll have to run, Manton—getting me that necktie I'm making? I left it on the mantelpiece in the library. If it isn't there, it's on the dressing table in my room, or somewhere. Please hurry.

"Oh, thank you! But you oughtn't to mind, for I'm really going wholly on your account—to get more silk, your neck has grown so big—and if I knit all the time, as I mean to do, I'm perfectly sure that I can finish your tie on the train, so that you can have it tonight. Yes, I'm coming down on the four-forty. It gets here at half-past six, doesn't it?"

True to her purpose, Mrs. Waring

knitted valiantly all the way to town. She even managed a few extra rows at the club while she waited for luncheon; and finally at four-forty-two, comfortably seated in the train for the homeward journey, she viewed her progress with satisfaction.

Then, taking off her gloves, she attached her thread to a fresh ball of silk, and started on the hour's uninterrupted work, which she hoped would finish the task. But a moment later a familiar

voice sounded at her elbow.

"Well, if this ain't luck," it declared; "the only vacant seat in the car."

Mrs. Waring looked up with some surprise, as Miss Almira Jenks, her arms full of bundles, slipped into the

empty place.

"It's good to set down," that lady sighed contentedly, "though I guess I'm about the last person you expected to see. I ain't much of a hand at leavin' home, but there was things accumulated, and I took advantage of the excursion rate, same as you did, I presume. My, but I'm beat out! I come in on the sixfifteen, so as I should have a long day, and I guess I got it by the way my limbs feel. Well, you are industrious!" Miss Jenks' eye had caught the flash of Mrs. Waring's needles. "You've done a lot since yesterday-ain't you? And seein' that fancywork of yours reminds me"-her face assumed a look of solemnity-"that there is more news of the man that made off with Berenice! Don't you want I should tell you?"

Mrs. Waring's knitting fell to her lap. She grew at once alert with in-

terest.

"Yes, indeed, I do!" she cried.

Miss Jenks' long narrative teemed with variety. It grouped facts and surmises skillfully together into an impressive whole. It was by turn dramatic, suggestive, elusive. It became, at times, even historical, and through all its mazes ran a clew of plausibility that led her listener to a firm conviction of truth.

The stranger had been seen last night, as late as nine o'clock, by three separate people back of Lull's livery stable. At half-past nine it was almost certain that he made an unsuccessful attempt to rob Deacon Spooner's hen house. Mis' Spooner herself heard her big Dorking rooster squawk, and she got out of bed, just as she was, to investigate. Well, she found the door wide open, although she was morally sure she'd closed it at seven.

Then little Viny Blodgett was most scared to death in that lonely piece of road up by the mill pond. It happened shortly after ten o'clock, when the poor child had to go for the doctor because her mother was taken with a seizure—which comes of not being willing to have a telephone in the house. Well, Viny heard distinctly something stirring in that big clump of evergreens just after you pass the graveyard!

Miss Jenks had had these facts straight from the station agent while she waited for the train; and there was a rumor, though she wouldn't vouch for it herself, that tracks of a man's feet had been found early that morning under the dining-room windows of the

Roberts' house.

At this Mrs. Waring drew a long breath.

"Why, that's next to our place," she interrupted. "And, do you know, I heard some one moving about myself."

Then she hastened to disclose to willing ears her alarms of the night.

Miss Jenks listened intently. "That's good testimony. nodded her head sagely. "And it's your bounden duty to report it to the constable. Why, the town's all wrought up, Mis' Waring; and there's even some that connects this man with the old Sturtevant murder mystery that was never solved. It happened over twenty years ago, and I must say that my first impression of the villain who stole Berenice was that he warn't over twenty-five himself. But the more I think of it, the more I'm inclined to Them criminals believe I was wrong. have ways of deceiving that honest folks don't know of, and I shouldn't be surprised if it turned out to be one and the same person.

"Mercy!" she added, with a glance across the car. "If we ain't comin' into

the township already! How I have run on! I guess you're wishin' I hadn't set with you, for you ain't done scarcely a mite of that knittin' you was so anxious to finish since I started talkin'."

Miss Jenks was right. Mrs. Waring glanced out of the window with surprise, and saw, beyond the curving line of track that swept to the station at the edge of the town, Wrenville lying white and green in the peaceful valley. How secure it looked with smoke curling

from its honest chimneys!

Yet Mrs. Waring, conscious with a sort of fearsome pride of a knowledge that could read beneath an innocent surface the alarming truth, found herself, as the train drew up at the station, wondering how she could ever have entertained for an instant the insane idea of life in the country, and resolving to demand that her husband dispose of his inherited acres to the first applicant.

It had taken some thought to reload Miss Jenks' arms with their many bundles; and, halfway down the aisle, Mrs. Waring stopped suddenly to discover that her knitting had been left behind. She turned, made her way back to the seat, and seized the ball of silk and needles. By the time she had reached the platform of the car, she saw the conductor giving the signal to start, and

she hurried down the steps.

At that moment a man sprang aboard, brushing roughly past her as he disappeared within the car ahead, and an instant later Mrs. Waring, standing on the station platform, turned suddenly, in response to a sharp tug at her hand, and saw with consternation that the necktie had disappeared, and that she was holding merely the ball of silk, from which a thin line of scarlet wound its way into the car.

Simultaneously she pulled and cried out; and, in quick response, the conductor, who had seen her plight, stopped the train. He appeared in a moment, laughing heartily and leading by the shoulder a confused young fellow, from the buttons of whose coat hung the remains of the necktie in a

tangle of scarlet silk.

"Guess you've caught something this time," the conductor began humorously. But Miss Jenks, who with the rest had flown to Mrs. Waring's aid, interrupted him, with a loud scream, as she looked into the stranger's face.

"Caught somethin'? I should say she had!" she cried. "Hold him! For the land's sakes hold him tight! Why, that's the man who stole Berenice!"

"Of course, there was great excitement, and a crowd of boys collected. Everybody talked at once, and old Rumsey came hobbling out of the station with a pair of rusty handcuffs-he always sits there, you know-and, because he was the constable, the conductor simply had to turn the man over to him, though he seemed perfectly willing to let his train wait and see what would happen; only that disagreeable old Mr. Maroon, who lives in Bulfinch, put his head out of a window in the smoking car, and said he'd report him if he delayed another instant, and all the time Miss Jenks was hanging to his arm-of course, Manton, I mean the prisoner's arm, don't be silly -and crying out in a loud voice: 'I want Berenice back. Tell me what you've done with her, you villain!' It was a hectic scene."

Mrs. Waring paused in the recital to note the effect of a curl with which she had chosen to elaborate her coiffure. She was dressing for dinner, and in the mirror she could see, in addition to a highly satisfactory reflection of herself, her husband's face as he stood buttoning his collar in his own room beyond.

"That's what made me so late," she went on, "for Miss Jenks kept insisting that the man be taken to her house—she called it the scene of his crime—and she finally got him to admit, though he spoke very little English, that he thought he'd seen a cat the day he'd stopped there, but he wasn't sure. So the least I could do was to offer to take them all there to settle the matter; and I had to sit on the front seat with Watson because old Rumsey handcuffed himself to the man, and couldn't be separated from him, and Miss Jenks

wouldn't! The crowd of boys followed, shouting all the way, and Watson was put out—I could see by his expression—and I'm sure I don't blame him, for I dare say I should have been myself if I hadn't felt a sort of responsibility! And now, Manton Waring, what do you think?"

In the poignancy of the moment, Mrs. Waring had deserted her mirror to frame herself in the doorway of her

husband's room.

"As we stopped in front of the house, who do you suppose was sitting on the step? My dear, it was Berenice herself! I was never more astonished in my life; and as for Miss Jenks, she fairly leaped from the carriage and swooped her up in her arms, and she was terribly dirty and full of burrs—Manton, you must not pick me up so; of course I mean Berenice—and the things she said to that common cat were really too foolish, and bear me out in what I've always thought of old maids.

"And now comes the most exciting part of all. Just as I was getting out myself with all Miss Jenks' bundles, I heard old Rumsey groan, and the carriage shook terribly; and, as I turned, Manton Waring, the prisoner just wrenched himself free, jumped from the seat, and ran into that patch of woods across the road. It was all over in an instant; and, although that crowd of boys went yelling after him, he was a very good runner, beside having quite a start. So I doubt if they ever catch him; and, after all, isn't it just as well? For, you see, nobody really cared.

"Miss Jenks scarcely turned her head, she was so taken up with watching Berenice drink her milk; and old Rumsey seemed perfectly contented when we got him some whisky, because he said he felt one of his heart attacks coming on; and I'm sure that it's nothing to me, for I never more than half believed those scary stories that you and Miss Jenks insisted on telling me; and, of course, no one stole Berenice, for cats are really vagrant animals.

"So, now that it's all over and no

harm done, do you know I think it's rather nice, in a dull place like this, to have a mystery that isn't quite settled! But really, Manton, you ought to speak to the authorities about those handcuffs. It's ridiculous to expect they could hold anybody! I examined them myself; and, besides being old as the hills, they're perfectly enormous; big enough for one's neck, and, oh——"

Mrs. Waring's voice broke suddenly in a note of dismay. She ran to her husband and seized him by the shoul-

der.

"Why, Manton Waring," she cried, "I'd forgotten all about your necktie! Speaking of necks must have reminded me. Wasn't that funny? Well, it's gone," she went on; "quite—quite ruined! You poor old dear." Her arms were about him. "You won't have any present at all! I'm so sorry. But you mustn't feel badly—you'll be late for dinner as it is—because I'm going to start another just as soon as I can go to town to-morrow for the silk."

Then she stepped back suddenly, and clapped her hands as if to applaud a

new idea.

"Why, I'd almost forgotten!" she declared. "Now I can get silk for a waist-coat, too! You'd like that, wouldn't you? It's awfully expensive, because it has to be imported, and the woman who's the agent here is a born robber."

Waring was looking at his wife in

quizzical amazement.

"What's the matter with you, Gussie?" he laughed. "What on earth are you talking about?"

But Mrs. Waring was dancing gayly

about the room.

"Why, the new silk won't really cost me anything," she called back. "Don't you understand, stupid? I'm going to claim the reward that was offered—you told me about it yourself—posted on the sycamore tree in front of the store. Do you remember how much it was? It belongs to me, Manton. You can't get around that—for, even if he did get away because the constable was such an idiot, no one can deny that it was I who caught the man who stole Berenice!"



R. IAN KNOTT was coming all the way from Texas to woo afresh the woman who, at the age of twelve, had solemnly avowed herself his de-

voted sweetheart, in return for a capful of unripe blackberries, a broken penknife, and a lucky farthing.

It was wintertime, and the lights from the windows of Craig Hall twinkled in the snow-covered fir plantation like the eyes of so many laughing fairies. Only one light, that from the window of Mr. Donald MacIntyre's study, blinked doubtfully, as though it found no occasion for merriment in the gathering of a large house party. As a fact, the blinking illusion was caused by Mr. MacIntyre himself, as he paced the floor, jerking out expressions of his doubts and fears concerning the future of Miss Kitty. His patient auditor was the family doctor, who had known Donald MacIntyre years before the latter realized that a fortune lay hidden in jute if the searcher went the right way to work.

"Mind you, Macgregor"—Mr. Mac-Intyre paused, and glanced over the rim of his glasses—"don't get it into your head that I'm not proud of Kitty; I'm only a bit doubtful that she'll bring herself to my way of thinking. Ian's father and I were lads together, we took our gruel together without squealing, and we had our treacle side by side, as it were. Joys and sorrows, sorrows and joys, we shared, and shared equal. And I know that it was his fondest wish that his lad and my girl should continue the partnership when he and I passed on. Do you see what I mean, Mac?"

"No, I don't," confessed the doctor.
"It seems to me that you're about as merry as you might be if this were a funeral you were looking forward to, instead of a betrothal. It isn't as if they didn't know each other. Tuts, man! What was the story you were telling me the other day about her ducking Macormick's laddie in the burn because he made Ian's nose bleed?"

"Aye, aye, man; but that was years ago. If we never grew out of childhood, excepting in the matter of years, we should have to find a new meaning for heaven. The lad's made a man of himself in Texas—they tell me he has more sheep than I have trees, and I've got two hundred acres of woodland. But Kitty! Eh, man! I mind the time when she would have cried her heart out if she'd seen a toad in pain. And now! She'd push a bull over if it got in her way!"

"What do you blame, Donald—education, or the larder?"

"Neither, Mac; it's politics, just politics. She's sounded all the depths and shoals of equality and inequality, so she says, and I pity the man that runs against the wrong edge of her temper. Man, did you no hear what she said to Baillie Drummond, the election agent?"

Mr. MacIntyre removed his glasses,

and wiped them carefully, so that he should not miss even a shadow of the

other's appreciation.

"Last winter, Kitty opened what she called a nonmilitant campaign, and fixed up a regular program of political meet-And Kitty can talk, mind you! Baillie is a dour bit man, who cannot see much good in any woman, although his wife's a nice little body. He attended every meeting that Kitty held, but it was not till the last one that he up and went for her. Called her a cackling hen. 'Politics,' he says, 'are not for the likes of ye; it's we men who have to bear the burden of responsi-'And what have you done?' Kitty asked. 'What have I done?' he ramped. 'I'll have you know that for days and days my wife's seen my face only for an hour or so-the demand on my time's been that enormous! 'I'm sick with envy,' said Kitty. 'I thought you would be,' said Baillie. 'I was thinking of your wife,' Kitty snapped."

The doctor gurgled into his glass of punch: "A fine woman, Donald; a fine woman—one worth the journey from Texas, I'm thinking. What's that,

man?"

The shock of a heavy fall on the floor above had set ajingling the glasses on the study table. Mr. MacIntyre sprang to the door at the very moment that a tall, athletic young woman came bounding down the stairs.

"Kitty, Kitty! What's amiss now?" There was reproach in Mr. MacIntyre's

voice.

"What's amiss, indeed!"

She brushed past him, swept imperiously into the study, and flung herself into the chair opposite the startled doctor. Her eyes were flashing with indignation, and her auburn hair was tumbled loosely about her ears, as though she had newly emerged from a mêlee.

"What's amiss?" she repeated, adding bitterly: "Nothing amiss, only I think you might have told me you were inviting all the idiots of the neighborhood—— I beg your pardon, doctor." She inclined her head graciously, as the eyebrows of the family friend arched.

"Did I hear you fall?" the doctor asked, with a genuine air of solicitude.

"You did not," she answered quickly. "That fool Macormick tried to kiss me—me!"

"And you knocked him down?" her

father suggested sadly.

"I did." She turned halfway round in her chair, and there was a challenge in her eyes. "What is the occasion of this party?" she demanded. "I'm sick to death of it already."

Mr. MacIntyre walked to the fireplace, and, without turning round, said

slowly:

"You know what it's all about, Kitty. You know as well as I do that the son of my old friend Knott will be here to-night right from Texas. I was hoping that you would help your mother and sisters to give him a welcome—a real Scottish welcome."

"If I invited a woman friend, I should know how to entertain her. Is it absolutely necessary that the son—"

"Ian Knott, Kitty."

"That Ian Knott should have a woman to give him welcome? Does he want me to sing to him and play on a jew'sharp, so that he can go back to his sheep-shearing friends, and talk about the lovesick country wench he captivated?"

Mr. MacIntyre glanced appealingly at the doctor, who had found something of inordinate interest in the bowl of his

brier pipe.

"Perhaps"—she had risen to her feet
—"perhaps it might serve your purpose,
and his, if you introduce him to that
sentimental fool upstairs, who will not
be able to find a hat to fit his head in
the morning."

Mr. MacIntyre motioned to the doc-

tor.

"In the next room, Mac, you'll find that old meerschaum pipe I was telling

you about."

"Kitty, sit down again," he said, when they were alone. "Ah, you're a fine girl, and I'm proud of you; but I'd give something to rid you of that temper. Sit down!" She had half risen from the chair. "I'm serious, Kitty; dead serious now, Young Ian Knott will

reach this house from Texas to-night; he's a good man, and straight, although I haven't seen him since the day we buried his father. Kitty, my girl, much as it will grieve me to part with you, I

should like to think-"

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"So that's the meaning of the party?" Her head was thrown back proudly. "Then give my regards to Mr. Ian Knott, and my compliments on his tact in courting by proxy. At least, he has the caution of the average Scot. Doctor Macgregor"—she strode to the door of the room in which the old friend was waiting—"if you have found the meerschaum pipe you had better bring it along quickly; father has something to put in it—to smoke!"

And, gathering up her skirts, she

swept out of the room.

"Donald, man," said Doctor Macgregor, "what a fine laddie the lass would have made. Of course, we don't know how Ian will strike her—it's these big, hefty ranchmen with a spice of romance about them that appeal to the women. How long ago is it, man, since you last saw the lad?"

"David Knott's been dead fifteen years this very week; Ian was a lad of twelve at that time, and promised to be a grand, upstanding youth. Why, what's the time, Mac? He's not due here till eight o'clock, and—"

"It's been gone this five minutes," said the doctor, "and there's some one coming up the drive this very minute—and in a carriage, mind you. These big ranchmen play with money like kittens playing with a ball of twine. Down you go, Donald; it's he, right enough."

And, indeed, it was he—lan Knott, sheep farmer, of Texas; height, exactly five feet six inches; hair, dark and inclined to be tired of growing; nose, small; mouth, decidedly weak, yet comical; eyes, proportionately small, yet capable of more eloquence than his tongue, judging from the manner in which they scrutinized Mr. Donald MacIntyre and Doctor Macgregor, the moment he alighted from the cab. His voice, as he said "Good evening, gentlemen," was high-pitched; nevertheless, there was a convincing ring in it.

"It's good to be back in the old neighborhood," he said, shaking Mr. Mac-Intyre warmly by the hand, "and I'm just dying to hear some of the real Scottish accent. But it's mighty cold in these parts—one of the first things I shall ask of Mrs. MacIntyre is—"

"Is--" The doctor and Mr. Mac-

Intyre spoke simultaneously.

"A hot-water bottle," said Ian, with-

out the ghost of a smile.

Together they led him to his room, together they waited on the landing while the servants supplied his needs, and together they bade him seek them in the study when his ablutions were over. They themselves went down into the study, and for five minutes neither spoke—simply stared at each other. Then the doctor reached for his glass, and the edge of it chinked against the teeth in his lower jaw.

"There's a look in his eyes," said Mr. MacIntyre apologetically, "that reminds

me of his father."

The doctor nodded consolingly.

"How many sheep did you say he had, Donald?" he asked dryly and ir-

relevantly.

"I remember reading," Mr. MacIntyre went on reminiscently, "that Napoleon was a little bit body, who didn't come up to your shoulders, Mac. You never can tell, can you?"

"Strength," said the well-intentioned doctor, "is not always a matter of mus-

cle."

Mr. MacIntyre nodded his apprecia-

tion of the platitude.

"You're right, Mac. The wiry little fellows who've traveled over the cobblestones of the world soon wear the big uns down."

The door was opened a few inches, and the head of Mr. Ian Knott peered

round the jamb.

"I hate to be a nuisance," he said, in a faint falsetto, "but that stupid girl has brought cold water, and my skin is so frightfully tender."

"We never use anything else," replied Mr. MacIntyre; and the doctor did not fail to note the touch of acerbity.

"How proveking!" said Mr. Knott, withdrawing quickly.

For a long while the only sound to be heard in the study was the snapping of the doctor's lips as he pulled at the meerschaum pipe. Then Mr. MacIntyre said, with a deep-drawn sigh:

"I mind the time when Dave Knott slept two nights in a ditch, and all he caught was a wigging from his wife because somebody had stolen the Christ-

mas goose as he lay asleep.'

When Mr. Knott returned to the study, the other men regarded him with mixed feelings of contempt and doubt -contempt because of what had gone before; doubt because of the undeniable penetration and intelligence of his eyes. Two words from Mr. MacIntyre served to introduce Doctor Macgregor, and in two minutes Mr. Knott had propounded a pathological problem which occupied the doctor in profound mental

exercise for exactly fifteen.

In five minutes Mr. MacIntyre had learned more of the subtleties of sheep raising than he had learned in respect of jute during all the years he had been in business. Twice he attempted the suggestion that Mr. Knott might like to meet the rest of the household before dinner, but he got no further than "Will you-" when he was thrown back once more into a maze of figures and potentialities concerning the jute market.

Right through the gamut of cause and effect, supply, demand, and foreign competition in jute; pathology, psychology, herbs, quackery, and doubtfully gained degrees, Mr. Knott roamed with a freedom of utterance that left the half-filled meerschaum pipe cold in the doctor's hand, and Mr. MacIntyre's mouth a tempting and seductive sanc-

tuary for flies.

And as they sat there in openmouthed wonder, the returned wanderer drifted into reminiscence, recalling every landmark within twenty miles of Craig Hall. When he spoke of his dead parents, his thin falsetto sank almost to a whisper. He referred to them, not with the customary flippancy of the son who has risen above the memory of humble childhood, but with reverential inflection. Urged into a reminiscent mood, Mr. MacIntyre also recalled a friendship that few men realize, and one of the lighter incidents he spoke of was the stolen goose already referred to. For the fraction of a secon I, Mr. Knott's face clouded.

"I don't remember the occurrence," he said quickly, "but I have heard of my father carrying the child of Jean MacConnachie six miles through the snow to the doctor's house, although the roads were hidden in drifts. That," he added decisively, "is something worth remembering.'

Before they recovered from the rebuke, he had littered the table with

curios from the Southwest.

The door opened at the moment Mr. MacIntyre was examining a piece of quartz, and Miss Kitty entered. She hesitated as her eyes fell on Mr. Knott, and glanced inquiringly at her father. The doctor began to hunt through his pockets for a light for the meerschaum

"Oh," said Mr. MacIntyre, in a voice that was half sigh, "you remember my

Kitty, Ian?"

"Oh, yes," was the response. Then, with deliberation: "What a big girl

you've grown, to be sure!"

The meerschaum pipe had a narrow escape, the doctor catching it just as it rolled to his knee.

Kitty drew herself up stiffly, and her

lips curled ominously.

"Perhaps you have not come in contact with many women, Mr. Knott," she suggested icily.

"No, not many," he confessed, unabashed. "Out in Texas, the females

"Emancipated," she interposed, "and more lightly bound by tradition; in fact, they are as free as-as the men-or what pass for men."

"Precisely. That is why the men come home to find women for wives."

"I wish you luck, if that is your mission, Mr. Knott," she retorted. "But Craigshire has the reputation of being unlucky."

She turned to her father, with a bored expression on her face.

'Mother is inquiring if Mr. Knott

has arrived. And the Herwitts have come."

Then, with her head erect, she walked

out of the room.

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The dinner, in the opinion of every one save Miss Kitty, was a tremendous success. By the irrony of fate and her father, her seat at the table was next that of Mr. Knott, but though Mr. MacIntyre and his crony watched anxiously for it, not the glimmer of a smile parted her lips. An indescribable look of boredom went to sleep on her countenance, and not even all the wit, anecdote, and brilliant repartee of Mr. Knott could

awaken and dispel it.

The dinner was almost finished when something occurred to give a fillip to the imagination of every one present. A servant brought word that the police inspector from Craigell wished to see Mr. MacIntyre, and the latter returned with the startling news that an escaped convict was supposed to be in hiding somewhere within a radius of ten miles of Craig Hall. According to the inspector, the wanted man was a native of the adjoining village; he had been taken to Craill from Edinburgh, where he was serving a sentence for burglary, in order that he might identify another prisoner, and on the return journey he had contrived to elude the escort.

Mr. MacIntyre walked to the win-

dow, and looked out.

"It is snowing fast," he said. "If he hasn't found a shelter, I'm sorry for him. What do you think, Ian?"

Ian Knott looked up, apparently surprised that his opinion should be sought. "Oh, I think that the man must be a fool to escape on such a night."

"Why?" It was Kitty who spoke, and there was something more than perplexity in her voice.

"Why!" he echoed calmly. "Because it's cold, that's all."

She turned from him with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Are you afraid of the cold?" she

asked caustically.

"I'm more accustomed to the cold shoulder," he confessed; and Doctor Macgregor dropped an apple on the floor. The very next day, Mr. Ian Knott confided in his host to this extent: "I think that your daughter, Kitty, is the most charming young woman I have ever met. Have I your consent, sir, to

pay her attentions?"

Exactly what Mr. MacIntyre said is not necessary to the story. Following the conversation, this Petruchio from Texas set about his love-making in a manner wholly as original as that favored by his prototype. On every occasion possible, he sought the company of Kitty, and while he did not exactly demean himself, he preferred to crawl along the river bed of romance rather than to float lightly on its surface.

In the eyes of her parents, he was a most desirable suitor; in the eyes of Kitty, he was the embodiment of contempt. Out of a strained sense of duty to a guest of her father, she tolerated his eccentricities, although there were periods of utter distraction, when she turned and whipped him with irony. Never was there a man less a hero than Ian Kott; never was man so ready to

admit the failing.

On the third day of his arrival, he almost acquiesced in the suggestion of Mr. MacIntyre that the household should turn out for a great, old-fashioned snowball fight. At the last moment, he begged to be excused, on the plea that he feared the glare of the sun would injure his eyes, and he had no

colored glasses.

"Perhaps you would like to sit by the fire," Kitty flashed, "and play 'Proverbs' with Aunt Hannah? She's not at all violent."

"Not a bad idea—for a girl," he replied. "And I know an awfully good proverb: 'There are more ways of smoothing a temper than by rubbing

it with sandpaper."

From that moment, Kitty strengthened her resolve to humble the ingenuous Ian. She entered into the spirit of the snowball fight, conscious of the fact that he was watching from an upstair window. And when she returned to the house, her taciturnity had disappeared, and in its place was bluster. Already the day was drawing in, but, with a

cry of "Who would like a ten-mile

motor drive?" she turned to Ian.
"Thanks," he said slowly ,"but I can't drive, and it wouldn't be fair on the chauffeur to make him turn out on such a day.

"We have no need of the chauffeur." she pressed, "I will do the driving, and you can sit in the bottom of the car and shiver."

"I'll go with you," he said briskly, and there was no escape for her.

He took a seat, not in the tonneau of the car, but beside her, and as he climbed into the car there was an expression on his face which Doctor Macgregor interpreted-triumph! pushed the switch along with the toe of her left foot, and, without a word, started the car at a speed that made him blink.

"Don't be afraid," she laughed mockingly; and this time his silence caused her to glance from the wheel to his

face.

He was gazing fixedly at her, and there was something in his eyes that she had not before detected. His expression was grave, and, had she been generous, she might have seen in it something that was nearly manliness.

"I wonder," he began slowly and calculatingly, "I wonder why you have taken so great a dislike to me?"

"I'm sorry-" she began; but he

checked her immediately.

"No, you are not. Please don't forget that an apology was invented by a hypocrite.'

"Shall we turn back?" she asked

"Certainly not," he replied, adding: "At least, not with my sanction. Are you afraid?"

She continued to drive on.

"You see," he pursued, "I like you -in fact, I think that I love you!"

She kicked the switch viciously, and brought the car to a standstill.

"Are you trying to feed a famished wit, in order that you may amuse them at dinner?"

There was passion in her voice and in the tremble of her lower lip.

"I had hoped," he said, with unblush-

ing effrontery, "that you were bringing me out so that I might have a chance of proposing."

She restarted the car. There was a

sneer on her face.

"No, I brought you out in the hope that I might stir some latent sense of manliness.

"Exactly! That's why I have proposed." His face was as stolid as that of the Sphinx, "Have you a spare accumulator, by the way?"

She turned to him with a puzzled ex-

pression.

"Because I think that the present one is running down; it would be awkward if we were compelled to walk back."

"It would be ghastly!" she muttered

maliciously.

"Unless you left your temper with

the car," he suggested.

They drove on for a distance of five miles, and then, with a sigh and a sob, the speed slackened, and the car came to a standstill. He jumped out.

"If you will let me have the spare accumulator, I'll fix it for you," he

Her lips were trembling again.

"There is no 'spare' in the car," she confessed. "I thought this one was well over 'four.' "

"A woman has a habit of thinking backward," he said dryly, seating himself on the step of the car. "Is that a cloud that's lost its way, or is it a mist?"

She glanced at the ridge of the hills to the left. A gray phantom was settling

down on the snow.

"It's mist," she replied; and there was the slightest trace of fear in her

For a quarter of an hour they sat there in silence; then he suggested that they might push the car to the side of the road, and look for assistance.

"How far are we from Craig Hall?" he asked, and her "Seven miles!" was more of a sob than anything else,

The mist came down with alarming swiftness. In a short while they were enwrapped so completely that he could hardly distinguish her features. To complete the predicament, the lamps refused to burn, despite the fact that he wasted fifty lucifers on them.

"How far away are we from anything like a village?" he asked presently. "Three or four miles—straight

ahead."
"We might borrow a horse and trap,"

he mused. "Suppose we try?"
"I'll stay here till you return."

The mist prevented her seeing the wince,

"Very well," he replied. "I'll pull the hood up, and perhaps you can make

yourself comfortable."

She would have given a finger for a refusal on his part to allow her to remain; but, without another word, he pulled up the cape hood, helped her into the car, threw the rugs over her knees, and set off in search of assistance.

Two hours passed, and he had not returned. In that period she had wept a little, and thought a great deal.

She began to listen for the sound of his footsteps, to hope for the sound, almost to pray for it. Then pride came to the rescue of her principles, and she descended from the car. Perhaps he had lost his way in the fog, and needed her help. A faint thrill of triumph moved her; it would be the coup de grâce should it fall to her lot to lift him out of a difficulty. Also, she remembered a keeper's cottage less than three miles along the road.

It was an unnerving experience, groping a way through a sea of choking mist, but the possibility of further tri-

umph gave her courage.

It seemed to her that she had been walking for hours before the faint outlines of the roadside cottage were discernible. With a low, irrepressible cry of relief, she groped for the garden gate, and reached the door. Three times she knocked in vain, although she fancied she heard, for an instant, a footfall in the single room on the ground floor.

She lifted the latch, and the door swung open. The silence within the house was as deep as that without. She hesitated for a moment; then all her principles rose in rebellion against the timorous beating of her heart. Three steps, and she was inside the room, and as she stood there on the bare floor the door swung back, and distinctly she heard the sliding of the bolt. The cottage was empty of furniture. And the blackness was impenetrable.

She did not scream, not even when she found that the door, to which she had silently crept, was locked and bolted. For the first time, the courage of which she had so frequently boasted was being put to the test, and the suspicion—and hope—that some one was playing a practical joke upon her strengthened her nerves.

But the mind, even of the strongest, is the sport of circumstances. The escaped convict! The recollection of the visit of the police inspector stunned her. A low moan of despair slipped from between her lips, and, like an echo, there came from somewhere in the room the sound of labored breathing! She felt for the wall, crouched back against it, and silently removed from her fur toque—a hatpin!

The thing in the room came nearer, and she held her breath. Her right hand was extended, the hatpin poised. Then something seemed to spring from the floor at her very feet and clutch at her left hand. She struck one blow with the hatpin; there was a gasp as of some one in pain. Then, as both her wrists were seized by the unseen enemy, she shouted aloud:

"Let me go; let me go! My—husband is coming along the road—his car has broken down—he will be here

in a moment!"

Immediately her hands were released, and the captor stumbled backward with the exclamation:

"Good Lord, it's Kitty!"

Mr. Ian Knott struck a match, and held the flickering light above his head. She had covered her face with her hands the moment she heard his voice.

"By Jove! You are a plucky girl!"
She peeped through the fingers, and a cry of dismay broke from her when he stood revealed. He was coatless, and the left sleeve of his white shirt was saturated with blood. And his lower garments were stamped with a hideous government mark.

"Don't scream again," he whispered. "There's some one in the room above, and-and I should like him to have a chance to get away." He raised his voice. "All right," he called out; "hurry up with your toilet, and let me have that coat of yours-it's beastly cold. You can come down if you're presentable."

There was a shuffling of feet on the bare, wooden stairs, and a haggardlooking man, dressed in Ian Knott's clothes, and carrying a small electric

torch, entered the room.

"My wife!" said Knott cheerily. "Lucky for you that it wasn't some one

The man came forward, and bowed

humbly before her.

"God bless your husband, ma'am," he muttered. "He's a man, the pluckiest I ever met.'

She glanced inquiringly at Knott, and

he smiled.

"Merely coincidence," he laughed. "Apparently we all sought sanctuary in this empty cottage. This-gentlemanwas the first to arrive, and naturally he resented my attempt to jump his

"And you nearly strangled me," the man groaned. "I've a pain all over my

body.

"Your own fault," Knott interposed. "You tried to bite, and—well, I had to defend myself."

"But these-these!" She was pointing to the government clothes.

Mr. Knott glanced down at the ill-

fitting suit.

"Bit awkward, isn't it? And perhaps you'll feel inclined to counteract my sentiment. But I've made this poor devil tell me his story, and I'm satisfied that he deserves a chance."

"You're the escaped convict?" Kitty's voice was strangely weak.

The stranger bit his lower lip. "Yes, ma'am; it's a long story, and I won't trouble you with it all. But I'm innocent, I swear. My old mother will prove it to you, if you like to ask her; she lives not far from here. I'm doing this for somebody else—somebody that's

got a wife and kiddies to keep out of the workhouse."

"You're not married?"

"No, thank God-I beg your pardon, ma'am, meaning no offense."

He was glancing apologetically from

her to Knott.

"But," Ian put in briskly, "he wants the chance to make a man of himself, and he's going to have that chance. Now, then, sonny, slip yourself. You understand the instructions? Pay with coin for all that you require, and if you get safely to Knott's Station, Texas, give my compliments to Foreman Heath, and say that I and my wife hope to be home about the middle of Au-

"If I'm taken before I get out of the

country?"

"I'll leave that to your discretionperhaps you knocked me senseless, and took my clothes. I didn't make a fuss about it because I dislike-er-publicity. Now, come along. I'll walk between you and-and my wife till we reach the car, and we'll drop you as near to the station as we dare.

"The car!" Kitty muttered.
"Oh, yes," said Knott. "I've got a fresh accumulator. Borrowed one from a motorist at the crossroads a couple

of miles ahead."

They dropped the convict less than a mile from Craig Hall, and slowly-very slowly-Kitty drove homeward. As they entered the drive, Knott, leaning forward, saw by the lights from the windows that tears were splashing down her cheeks.

"Slip in quietly, and bring me an

overcoat," he whispered.

When he came from his room, he found her sitting alone in the dining room; the others of the household were making merry in the drawing-room above. She was sobbing bitterly, her face buried in her hands. Gently, yet firmly, he lifted her to her feet, and compelled her to look into his eyes.

"Well," he said, with a quiet smile,

"shall we play 'Proverbs'?"

And the proud and dignified Kitty actually allowed him to touch her cheek with his lips.



HE decision in the Rodney will case having been rendered in favor of the widow, after three years of litigation, Mrs. Rodney became at once the

storm center of interest and talk which made her, according to the personal point of view, a hard, cold, mercenary schemer, or a woman of character who had borne herself with great sweetness and discretion under very trying circumstances.

Particularly did the decision seem to affect two men-Cornwall Hastings and Fielding Dayton-both of whom had for more than a year shown her devoted attention with matrimony as a goal, so rumor said; and both had sought an interview with her immediately after the news had reached the public; but each had been baffled, though neither of them was lacking in qualities of persistence which sometimes promote success. Each man therefore welcomed the announcement of opportunity offered when it became known that Mrs. Rodney was to be present at Mrs. Trent's bridge party.

As for Valerie Rodney herself, the decision was a part of the surprise which had made her her husband's sole heir, since there were no children. She had never expected that, in the event of his death, her husband would so arrange his affairs; but, since he had done so, she could not fail to acknowledge that he had chosen the lesser of two

evils, as he looked at it, and allowed himself a grim joke in cutting out relatives he had permitted to consider themselves his heirs, and for whom he had always expressed a small regard.

If, however, there had been no other fruition of this trying period to Valerie, she had found opportunity to develop and use the graces of spirit, and to exercise her sense of humor as a safeguard against a belief in a lack of disinterestedness in man or womankind.

Nor was her acceptance of an invitation to Mrs. Trent's bridge party, just after the decision was handed down, due to a desire to trumpet her triumphant vindication of innocence of charges of undue influence made by her husband's relatives; but to her friendship for Mrs. Trent, a school friend who had been her warm and loyal adherent; nevertheless, the fact that she had accepted the invitation, when she had heretofore lived in a semiseclusion, was felt to be proof positive that she meant to enter social life for the display of her vast possessions, a rumor which did not fail to bring about many a private rehearsal of charges and countercharges by friends and enemies, and roused a vivid curiosity to see how Valerie Rodney "took" the decision which had made her the possessor of large wealth. Mrs. Trent was saved the usual bother of securing eleventh-hour supplies for delinquents, since no one who could possibly accept her invitation declined it.

So anxious was Cornwall Hastings to have the first word with Mrs. Rodney, that he posted himself in the hallway, and not far from the entrance of Mrs. Trent's doorway, that he might have a chance of a word before any one else, his small, glittering brown eyes fixed

eagerly upon each fresh arrival.

Hastings always suggested the savage, though he had covered himself with the offerings of civilization until most people believed that his wealth, his manners-his lack of them, rather-were highly developed individuality. He meant to marry Valerie Rodney, and particularly since he had heard the decision had his desire been quickened. Hastings belonged to that class of men to whom externals mean value or lack of it. Valerie's mind, her heart, her soul were abstractions; he merely saw her as a woman to be desired because she had great possessions and fascination, and held herself above his desire.

Sometimes his hands closed on themselves brutally when he remembered her light fashion of laughing at him and his tentative proposals. He intended to make himself her master, to have her adapt herself to his slightest whim, he told himself now, as he waited for her. She never had, he assured himself with masculine self-appreciation, been sufficiently impressed with the honor of his

When Mrs. Rodney came in, unhurried and calm, he was at her side in an

instant.

"I have been waiting and watching for you." He spoke reproachfully, as if that lack of hurry on her part were almost a grievance to him. "I wanted the first word with you. You know what I have always asked of you-that you would marry me. I want my answer. You must give it to me. I want to be sure of you.

He tried to take her hand, his warm

breath swept across her face.

She drew herself just out of his reach -tantalizingly so, he told himselfthrew her evening coat open, looking down a moment at the fastenings as she did so; and then she lifted her eyes slowly and gazed straight at him. He could

have sworn that she was laughing at him, though her lips were grave.

"I want my answer," he said heavily,

demandingly.

"I'll give it to you to-night before I leave," she said, as her eyes rested on him with a far-away, contemplative look in them. "I want to be sure of myself. -of-you." She hesitated over the last words, to the infinite displeasure of her hearer.

As she turned to the cloak room. Fielding Dayton stood barring her way with his sycophantic smile. Dayton had always meant to ask Mrs. Rodney to marry him the moment he heard a decision favorable to her in the will contest; and, in case of an unfavorable one, quietly but firmly to withdraw from her list. He really could not think of marrying her unless she were rich, he assured himself, though he did acknowledge her charm; and he had been, he felt, discretion itself in keeping an even balance so that he could sidestep either way. She had social connections, and given this great wealth, a capacity for bestowing upon him all the things that he valued in life; and he was quite certain that he would make a good husband for her-that is, his idea of a good husband, her ideas on the subject being of minor importance.

"I have been waiting patiently for you," he announced, with an ingratiating pressure of her hand. "I wanted you to know how earnestly I have hoped that you would succeed in your contention, and how my heart has followed you and my sympathy been with you. Sympathy, do I say? Rather my love. You know how I have loved you, and how I have refrained from bothering you with it until this moment, lest I weary you with my importunities; but now, before any one else has a chance to say a word to you, I have come with my heart in my hand to ask you to take it, to give me yours. Won't you say 'Yes' to me?"

Valerie stood still and looked at him,

patiently listening.

"That is very good and kind of you to be so considerate, I am sure. Friendship-real friendship-is never a thing of which one may speak lightly; but love—— You have never spoken of your love to me before. Why do you offer it to me now?"

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"Because I must. I have loved you in secret a long time. I have waited, as I have told you, but you must have known my desire. Give me your answer, will you not?"

Valerie's eyes held his. He said afterward that he thought it very rude and unmannerly for any woman to stare at a man the way she stared at him. She seemed to be trying to read his very soul.

"To-night," she said briefly, "before

I go home.' When she entered the card room with that indolent grace of hers which always seemed to place her in a class apart, and moved slowly toward the table to which she had been directed, every one turned to look at her. They saw a woman of medium height, a bit delicate looking, a trifle weary, perhaps, with a suggested spirituality in the beautiful brow from which the dark hair, faintly sprinkled with gray, swept back in exquisite curves, in the eyes also -dark eyes they looked now, though the light showed them to be hazel, with a starry gleam on them. She was simply gowned in a soft black chiffon trimmed with glistening silver, against which her lovely arms and neck gleamed mistily, making harmony with her hair, her eyes, hinting of that deeper harmony of mind and soul as expressed in a marked individuality.

When she had reached the table to which she had been directed, she hesitated a moment, looked toward the spot in faint, amused surprise, threw out her hands questioningly, and raised her eyebrows. There were three men standing there waiting for her—Hastings, Dayton, and Stilman Lassiter.

"Why am I left without feminine support and balance?" she asked, an adorable smile just at the edges of her lips. "Am I to infer that I need no women to give me countenance and comfort among so many male—things?"

Hastings promptly answered "Yes," glooming at her with his small eyes.

Dayton laughed that snobbish, mirthless laugh of his which always expressed a desire to placate and flatter those whom he considered worth his efforts; but Lassiter held her chair for her, and smiled companionably at her. There was not the faintest suggestion of a personal interest in her on his part, as with that genial fashion of his of taking the whole world into his confidence, he said in a voice that had in it something of an organ roll, deep, rich, musical, as he waved his hand toward the other two men:

"Our hostess informed me that I was to play with you, and I accepted the honor with pleasure; but our friends here have tried each of them to deprive me of what is legitimately mine, without avail, as you see. Mrs. Trent has washed her hands of us and our importunities, and told us to settle it among ourselves. Hence, this table spread with the three of us—you can have

your choice. And are we not all better

than many women?" He smiled at her

a trifle wickedly as he sat down in a

chair beside her with that companion-

able smile of his which had in it noth-

ing but a potential friendliness. "I'm sure these two men think so."

Mrs. Rodney swept them all with her glance, amused, contemplative, provocative, as she looked up at Lassiter from under her sweeping lashes—a long,

smiling look.
"And you?" she questioned.

He drew himself up, met her glance with one so like her own, so gayly mocking, so unrevealing, that she laughed outright.

"I have never worn my opinions on my sleeve," he said, in that deep, rich voice of his, with its edge of light banter.

Then he caught up the cards next to him, and slowly shuffled them through his hands as he regarded her carefully.

Her gaze dwelt on him for one brief moment, and then she dropped her eyes, the smile at the edges of her lips more adorable than ever, with a hint of mystery that perplexed him while it fascinated and fixed his attention. He had wondered about Mrs. Rodney ever since he had met her at a small dinner party at his brother's house, three weeks before, on his return from a great constructive work he had undertaken in the desert of the Southwest, which had brought him fame; but some gossip repeated to him led him to believe that she represented a type in which he was not, he assured himself, at all interested; nevertheless, he realized, as he met her this second time, that she had lived in his thought, and was now insistently claiming his attention.

But—was there anything to her? He had asked it at first, and was asking it now. Anything beyond a charming surface offering a brilliant presentment of social varnish, the trick of hazel eyes, dreamy sometimes, sparkling, brilliant, and alive at others, but always a trifle impatient, and with a suggestion of lack of satisfaction in life. Assuredly she moved in an atmosphere of fascination, not only because of the notoriety caused by the will contest, but because she was an unusual personality; and he found it difficult to place her, to read her, and it

baffled him.

As for Valerie Rodney, she had come out of her matrimonial experience with a few shattered illusions, but not indifferent to life nor cynical, largely because she was a woman of more than ordinary intellect; and because she held a belief, indeed a positive conviction, that so far she had merely walked in the outer courts of life; she had never penetrated to the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies.

Like every young girl, she had believed that she would enter this sacred place through matrimony; but alas, she had not. After her husband's death, she had thrown herself into charity work, in a desire to secure by that carelessly prepared prescription always the troubled-happiness to through work for others; but she had discovered that organized charity, indeed any charity, was a big machine creaking on slowly, ponderously, and using only effects, never causes, to feed it; and she had then and there decided to go back to causes to find out why charity was needed.

Refusing, too, the social contests with which so many women dull their sensibilities, because she held all social threads in her hands, and disdaining the lure of club life with which numbers of women drug themselves into a belief of mental satisfaction, she had settled down to what seemed a dry and arid existence, automatic almost, since she had enough wealth to reduce personal effort to a minimum; and yet, through all this contest, she had held that project in her mind that had been suggested to her in her charitable efforts; and she had cried out continually that she might find use for herself-use other than living some one's life in a state of matrimony; and here-now, was Lassiter, with an atmosphere of adventure clinging to him like a garment of inspiration.

Her project seemed that much more real when she felt the spell of this man who had done great things. He roused to a throbbing insistence that belief of her which lay always just back of her thought—a conviction that she possessed powers held in reserve for something, and that through them she could enter the inner courts of life to which she had never penetrated. She seemed to be listening to the promptings of a voice that told her she could speak with authority, once she tried to do so; that she possessed qualities that asked, nay, demanded opportunity for use.

It was after he had played bridge with her for a while that Lassiter settled back in his chair with the spirit of investigation strong on him. He realized with extreme satisfaction that Mrs. Rodney had positive opinions, that she was mentally and intuitively alert and quick; that she had powers both of reserve and resource; that she could draw inferences and convey information with subtlety; that she had not only cultivated the outer presentment, but that this was a fair indication of a woman who had learned to think and reason. Lassiter always asserted that he could count on his finger the people, among a rather large set of acquaintances, who could reduce their mental processes to thought. It was after

playing the final rubber of the evening that he decided to try her, to put her to the test; and the impulse came in a flash.

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Hastings was dealer, playing just then with Dayton; Mrs. Rodney was leader, and Lassiter third hand.

Holding ace, queen, two of hearts; king, queen, knave, eight, six of diamonds; eight, seven of clubs; ace, queen, ten of spades, with a score of twenty to nothing against the dealer, Hastings made it no trumps.

Valerie leader, holding six, five, three of hearts; ace, nine, three of diamonds; knave, five of clubs; and knave, six, five, three, two of spades, led her fourth best spade, a perfectly conventional opening, since spades was her long suit.

Dayton put down the dummy with knave, nine, eight, seven, four of hearts; five, four of diamonds; king, three, two of clubs; and king, eight, seven of spades.

Lassiter, third hand, held king, ten of hearts; ten, seven, two of diamonds; ace, queen, ten, nine, six, four of clubs;

and nine, four of spades.

The first trick fell to Hastings, whose ten took it, and gave him a chance to endeavor to establish his long suit of diamonds. To his lead, on the second trick, of his king of diamonds, Valerie responded with the ace. then took a quick glance at the dummy. Evidently Lassiter could not help her with her suit of spades; if he had anything, it must be clubs-her own short She led the knave of clubs, through the king in the dummy hand on this inference, and in an endeavor to give him a chance if the inference were correct. The knave holding good, she kept on. It certainly was Lassiter's suit. She led her five. Lassiter, having counted his cards carefully, took the trick with his nine spot, and then led the suit out to finish, giving the two of them the odd trick, the game, and the rubber.

After he had counted the score and settled, Lassiter sat back in his chair, and gazed contemplatively at Mrs. Rodney.

"Did you know that you were putting

into form one of the greatest contributors to success in the game—in life—in anything by that play of yours? Did you do it after thought, or blindly, by instinct, from some inner conviction or impulse?" His question was an eager one, his luminous, searching eyes quickened her imagination.

"Why—I don't know—" she faltered, wondering, yet interested.

"Don't you know that the ability to consider the other man's or woman's point of view is one of the greatest mind openers in the world, and the key to many a success? But more than that, if one has enough acumen to realize that there is something that lies out of one's own little line of vision, and can try to find out what it is-even if it be one's shortest suit that one must use as a staff-ah, there's where adventure lies. Adventure—the use of one's powers, and wits, and common sense, the strain of the intellect to find something beside the trodden path, the conventional way." Lassiter threw a warmer note into his voice. "There is no joy like the joy of making something out of nothing, of using one's ability to the limit of capacity-and no one knows what the limit of his capacity is until he tries, and keeps on trying, with the result that he finds there is no limit to what he can do." He leaned forward eagerly, his hands, his arms on the table in front of him, his luminous eyes holding hers. "Have you ever tried to imagine how much of life lies out of your own little-mud puddle, shall we say?" There was a whimsical smile on his lips. "Or have you ever dreamed that the way to it lies by the use, nearly always, of one's shortest suit?"

Hastings threw himself about in his chair with gruff, protesting impatience. That kind of talk was "plain rot," as he expressed it. Dayton gave voice to a thin little cackle, which might mean anything or nothing. It was intended to convey the fact that he was rather shocked by Lassiter's enthusiasms. If the man had not been successful in his constructive work, and that success were not the subject of public comment, Dayton felt that he really would have

been obliged to signify his disapproval of what he called "bounder manners."

But Valerie felt as if she were being swept along on a current of thought that was taking her where-she did not

"Why, Mrs. Rodney, you-you women who make social life a motive and an aim have no idea how contracted is your view. Do you know that life, a big, swirling life, goes on about us, and"-he threw out his hands with a hopeless gesture-"we only take a little pinch of it here and there, use it as one would a bit of snuff, to exhilarate for a moment or two? Why don't you thrust aside that social personality you present, and get out and see life-the life of men and women-the life the workers live-real life? Why don't you work for yourself? Try it! You'll soon be finding out that you've been living on the husks of existence."

Valerie's eves were shining, her breath was coming quickly. This-this was the thing that she had thought once -that she did not even stand at the edge of life, and that it was slipping from her, sliding away from her, being drawn out of her hands, and she knew not how to use it-this wonderful, beautiful gift that was hers belonged to her. It was being scattered, taken from her, wasted, and she was letting it go, without ever having tried to use it.

"What is my short suit?" she asked, in a low voice, her eyes shining with the same luminous light that made Las-

siter's so inspiring.

"Yourself," he answered promptly. "We are always our own short suit, as long as we lead the conventional life, as long as we believe in externals, or rely on circumstances, or people, or things to give us a place in life, or secure the luxuries we fancy we must have."

Hastings here interfered again. "Oh, stop your nonsensical talk," he grumbled. "There is no telling where Lassiter will lead you, Mrs. Rodney.

He's a wild dreamer."

Dayton laughed, that sycophantic, ingratiating, mirthless attempt at laughter; but neither Lassiter nor Valerie Rodney heard them.

"You have everything that money can buy-everything," Lassiter remarked, leaning toward her across the table. "Suppose you were left without one penny; landed in these streets of this great city, forced to earn your living, to secure shelter, food, lodging, a living by your own efforts, could you do it? If you couldn't, you've no right

to your wealth."

Valerie looked at Lassiter long, ponderingly; then she wondered how he had guessed her thought; then she threw back her head and took a long, sustaining breath. To earn one's living, to use one's self, one's powers for a purpose that would benefit others as this man was doing! To fix a goal clean and far among the stars, beyond the dust of effort, and working through obstacles, hindrances, worries, fretseverything that would hold one backreach that goal-find the stars!

"Could you?" asked Lassiter. Valerie threw back her head again, and laughed in his eyes.

"Yes," she said. "Yes, I could." "But would you?" He shook his

"I could," she said firmly; "and I would."

Hastings rose impatiently from his chair, shook himself irritably, and put a forcibly detaining hand, even a possessive one, upon Mrs. Rodney's, lying beautiful, slim, and white, and covered with gems, on the table beside him.

"Let me see you to your motor. Don't wait here for supper," he urged. "Lassiter," he complained, "you're talking all sorts of nonsense this evening, and Mrs. Rodney knows it. I am going to take her home."

But Valerie paid no attention to him; she shook her hand free.

"Yes," chimed in Dayton, "Mrs. Rodney is not interested in what you call the problems of life. She-we know, has solved them to the satisfaction of her friends by being just herself. You could not 'pour fresh per-fume on the violet.'" he quoted fatuously, "or give her any larger outlook on life than she already possesses in the estimation of those who care for her."

Dayton was carefully carrying his devotion on the conventional salver for all to see; but Mrs. Rodney did not notice it; she was looking straight at Lassiter questioningly, and yet with a mysterious smile upon her lips.

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Suddenly she turned to them all.

"I have a secret to tell you," she said, "and these two old friends"—she put a hand, one each, upon those of Hastings and Dayton—"have a right to know it before I give it out to the world." Then she turned to Lassiter. "And you, because of what you have said, so much of which has been in my own thought in these last two or three years.

"I have given up my fortune, and I'm going to earn a place in life." She smiled slightly. "I won't be penniless; but I'm going to use what I have left for the benefit of those who must be taught what I have taught myself—to make a place. I'm going to play my

short suit to the limit.'

Lassiter's eyes gleamed, he settled down closer in his chair. Hastings jerked his hand rudely from under Valerie's, and pushed his chair roughly from the table, throwing one leg over the other in an impatient fit of sulks. Dayton, however, drew in his small, close mouth in horror and dismay.

"I was forced, most reluctantly," Valerie continued, "to enter a contest in order that my husband's will might properly construed; but"---she smiled wearily, as if the whole subject distressed her-"though the law has given it to me as my husband left it to me, I am unwilling now to accept it. I have made an arrangement with the contestants by which they take over everything but just what would have been mine had my husband made no will. You would all approve of that, would you not?" She raised limpid, innocent eyes to each man sitting there. To Dayton she said: "You would not allow it to make any difference in our -friendship-this loss of fortune-would you?"

Dayton drew himself up primly, formally, frigidly.

"My dear Mrs. Rodney," he shrilled,

"your friends would deplore anything so unnatural, so freakish on your part. I, for one, would consider myself deeply offended and betrayed. I should feel, considering what I have asked of you this evening, that you had not thought of me or my feelings by doing anything so utterly at variance with good judgment, or thought of what it might mean to me to see you deprived of your rightful possessions." He rose, drawing his hand from Mrs. Rodney's loose clasp rather indignantly, and speaking very firmly, very decidedly. "No, Mrs. Rodney, I should feel that I should have to consider the matter very deeply before I would countenance anything so quixotic. Unless you retain your property, you must realize that I shall be deeply offended."

He turned on his heel and left the place, pushing his way among people standing near, and looking like an angry bird of prey with ruffled feathers.

Valerie's eyes, amused, contemplative, a trifle sad, followed him; then she shrugged her shoulders, and turned to

Hastings.

"And you—you would not deplore the loss of my fortune, would you?" There was a hard little tone in her voice now. "Should I give you the answer to the question that you asked me a while back, would you consider that I was empty-handed? Would you consider me freakish, as our friend insists?"

She showed no anxiety to know his answer; her eyes held merely an

amused curiosity.

"It would make a difference to me," he said gruffly. "I've got enough, but I'm quite willing that others shall have enough, too, especially an expensive woman. All women are expensive these days, and I doubt not you are like all the rest." There was a grim smile on his face. "And I assure you that I would come down hard on any such proposition. I would forbid it."

Valerie's eyes blazed. She drew herself up slowly, haughtily, even regally. "Forbid?" she asked. "Who forbids

"Forbid?" she asked. "Wh

"I would," he insisted, carried be-

yond himself by what he termed the supremest folly.

She turned and looked at Lassiter,

her shoulder to Hastings.

"Would you find a corner where you and I can talk and take me away?" she asked, as she rose to her feet and moved with that indolent grace of hers away from the man who had attempted to dictate to her conscience, away from his eager attempt now to explain.

When Lassiter had found a servant to bring them food, he smiled down at her. His face was glowing, his eyes—those luminous eyes—held only supremest satisfaction. He put one strong, detaining hand on hers as he drew a

long breath.

"To think that I did not know you at first—though I believe I did. To think that I have found a real partner! A woman who knows how to play her short suit!" He laughed a joyous laugh. "Did you mean it?"

"Yes," she said. "I have learned three ways to earn my way in the world while I have been waiting, and

no favors asked, either."

She caught her breath, as his hand

held hers in a tight grip.

"But there's only one place for you," he said, "you dear, and beautiful, and wonderful woman. You can't play your short suit alone this time, for I hold all the winning cards—they lie in my hand for your use."



TWILIGHT

HOW many things are like this sad, sweet hour,
When neither light nor darkness rules the world—
And nature lulls to slumber ev'ry flower
Before night's dusky banners are unfurled.
A solemn hour when all things bright must die
That made the world so radiantly fair;
The sun's pale crimson fades upon the sky,
The breath of night is in the perfumed air.

Perchance there's some desire in our hearts
That, like this dying day, will never see
The light that hope to everything imparts,
And never blossom to reality.
Some secret love that never must be told—
Some hidden wish—some thought of ungained fame,
All sink on life's horizon, dark and low,
Just like the sunset's dying evening flame.

Whose life is there this twilight does not mark?
Whose heart is there that does not hold within
Some poor, dead hope that once burned like a spark,
And struggled hard its victory to win?
So struggles day against the coming night,
Till, weary with the shadows on her breast,
She yields to darkness all her treasures bright,
And slowly sinks, just like our hopes—to rest.

JOSEPH P. GALTON.



T

HE Cynic glanced over and beyond the delicate breakfast equipment on the damask expanse. Through the thick crystal of the window, he

could see the topmost branches of a tree which stood before the great apartment house. Upon the highest twig of the highest bough, a bird from the park across Fifth Avenue was evidently trilling out an ecstasy of song. The small throat was swelling visibly, even as the buds of the tree were swelling and fairly bursting with the pulse and throb of the rising life.

"Mr. Frederick Rivers wished most particular to see you, Mr. Alexander."

If an automaton of such skillful workmanship were so marvelously constructed as to possess a voice, the precisely measured utterance would assuredly have been the manner of its speech.

"Mr. Frederick Rivers?" repeated the Cynic, with a petulant frown.

"Your nephew," continued the old family servant, adding, with a slight stress and admonition such as he had formerly employed when cautioning his then youthful charge not to fall from his pony and bump his nose: "Your nephew was here, Mr. Alexander, as early as nine o'clock, when, of course, I told him you wasn't up. He wouldn't come in, but I 'ave 'ad my eye on him for the last hour, a-walkin' this way and that under the trees on the opposite side of the way."

"Let us hope he may have had time to cool and moderate the lavalike glow and flow of the impetuosity which us-

ually marks his demeanor," rejoined the Cynic discontentedly. "But the early bird catches-it. Also, it never shines but it pours. However, to make use of that stupid expression of idiocy, and to look on the bright side of things, why, if I had not been disappointed at this early hour in my hope of a quiet breakfast, I might have gone on entertaining all sorts of foolish anticipations and beliefs. Nothing, Tibbits, like a good stiff draft of disillusionment to set one up for the day. Now, admit my worthy young relative, so that I may dispose of one annoyance as soon as possible."

"Yes, Mr. Alexander."

The Cynic remained alone. With a sigh, he cast himself into his big armchair, and stared sternly at the argentcovered dishes, the translucent porcelain before him. The Cynic was not old. In fact, for the true enjoyment of cynicism a certain amount of youth is absolutely necessary. The touch of gray at his temples, which was not unbecoming, was exactly of the degree to permit a pleasant indulgence in the most bitter sarcasms. With true white hair and twinges of the gout, the utterance of neat, quotable epigrams on the vanity and falsity of life loses in zest. The question arises whether this existence is, after all, wholly to be scorned, and whether there may not be some good in the worst of possible worlds. As was the case, the Cynic sat serene in his dissatisfaction, and confident in his dis-

Even against the walls of his break-

him was the support of the most renowned scoffers of the past. At his left hand, the golden lettering on the dull, polished, green leather of the binding displayed the name of the archsatirist, Voltaire himself, the volumes-Edition de Kehl, Kehl 1784 et seq. stretching in a long, serried, sumptuous array of censure. He had merely to look to the right for his eyes to rest on the yellow levant luxury of the books in which were inscribed the "Maxims" of La Rochefoucauld, the very type and exempler of all cynicism. By turning his head, he could see, in appropriate, rich red morocco dress, the "Works" of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield-these last, to be sure, a little tucked out of the way, as if, in spite of the noble author, their owner hardly cared to give them great prominence on his shelves. So surrounded, sustained, and supplemented with skepticism on either flank, and in reserve, he waited the appearance of the visitor who had been announced to him.

What had brought the youngster? Some folly certainly—some scrape probably. Anyhow, the Cynic concluded that it could not be money. His nephew, as he comfortably reflected, owned more city blocks than he knew. In addition, he possessed a building in the "financial district," covering many hundreds of square feet of the most valuable ground on earth, and rising so high that the clouds almost seemed to rest on it. Moreover, in safe-deposit vaults were piled stock certificates in his name, in such number as to give control of whole railroads, and bonds belonging to him which drew a large part of the reve-

nues of others.

In fact, the name was one held through the city, and the country, and all the wide world as one of the synonyms of wealth. This being so, the nearest and most responsible member of the family believed that he could be saved any apprehensions on the ground of financial difficulties.

Still, the Cynic considered with ready appreciation that there were very many ways in which a man—a young man—

fast room rose low bookcases. About could make an idiot of himself. The him was the support of the most renowned scoffers of the past. At his left hand, the golden lettering on the dull, polished, green leather of the binding displayed the name of the archives.

"Good morning, Uncle Alec!" the cheery voice called, as the young gentleman stepped rapidly forward, seized the Cynic's hand, and wrung it with super-

abundant vigor.

"Well, Fred-" he replied, as he winced, frowned, and straightened out

his fingers.

"I shouldn't have come so early to see you," the joyous youngster hurried on, "unless I had the greatest news in the world to tell you, the most important news that—"

"You anticipate the daily newspaper,

at which I was about to look.'

"To me, I mean," replied the nephew, with his manifest happiness in no wise disturbed by the coolness of tone. "I am engaged to be married!"

"Good heavens, Fred!" exclaimed the Cynic, dropping back, and then sitting

up with the keenest attention,

If the heir of a reigning house had seen fit to invade the breakfast table of the prime minister, and there casually announce his intention of taking a bride, that high official could hardly have heard the statement with greater consternation and apprehension. No more than a crown prince could the inheritor of the Rivers fortune be united with a consort without due consideration, and the weighing of questions of state. To appear casually, and informally disclose such a purpose, was enough to make any privy councilor or principal relative sit up and take immediate notice.

"Which is she?" eagerly demanded the Cynic, running over in his mind all the more prominent young women of

the modish world.

"You—you don't know the name." Anxiety appeared suddenly and unmistakably in the agitated countenance of the listener.

"At least," young Mr. Frederick Rivers continued lightly, "I don't believe that you have ever heard of Miss Letty Lark." "Miss Letty Lark!" gasped his uncle.
"Such stage names as Montmorency
and Vavasour have generally gone out
of fashion in the profession."

"A stage name! You mean that she is on the stage?" interrogated the Cynic,

in horrified accents.

"Now appearing in 'Up to the Minute,' at the Greatacre," declared his nephew, as if what he said were the hugest joke in the world.

"A show girl!"

"A chorus girl, which is a very different thing, I will have you to understand, if you please," was the answer, given with sudden dignity. "Many most charming and admirable young women are in such positions as a preparation for the more serious requirements of their art. Meanwhile, they are earning an honorable living, and making money which enables them to support others dependent on them. When Miss Glyn Conyngham—pronounced in the South, Cunningham—"

"She is from the South," interjected the Cynic, "and is called, or calls herself, Miss Glyn Cony—Cunningham?"

"That is her real name," Frederick Rivers assured him proudly.

"Her real name!" the Cynic repeated, with a very significant accentuation.

"Down in Dixie, girls often take family surnames for their first names. Glyn has been a Christian name for generations with the Conynghams of Virginia."

"Actually she has the temerity to say

Virginia?"

"Culpepper County, Virginia."

The Cynic, as he shook his head, raised his eyes in protest to the paneled and fretted woodwork of the ceiling, and then fixed them with fascinated intent upon the speaker.

"Her grandfather, who was one of the last to surrender with the army of General Joseph E. Johnson, having refused to give up his sword at Appomat-

OX---

"Stop—stop!" protested the Cynic excitedly. "No—go on! Go on!" he enjoined resignedly.

"Colonel Conyngham went to Mexico, but returned to the family plantation and to poverty, marrying, late in life, an old sweetheart. When Glyn's grandfather and grandmother died, her mother, their only child, was left to struggle along alone on the old place. She had married a son of one of the neighboring first families, as poor as herself, who was killed by his horse falling when Glyn was a baby. Glyn, when she was eighteen—a year ago—determined to come to New York to make a living for herself and her mother. Such a delightful and wonderful lady—like those of the ancien régime before the war."

"Perfect! Perfect!" the Cynic muttered under his breath, with the manner of a virtuoso savoring a precious

strain of music.

"In their small room in the boarding house, she seems as much a grande dame as she would be in her own Southern mansion. You should hear her tell the stories of the old lavish days which her father and mother told to her. She believes Glyn the most perfect girl in the world, as I do—as she is. And to think that she should care for me, and has promised to marry me!"

"Of course, the few dollars which you happen to possess have not counted for anything with her in her decision,"

"Certainly not!" said Frederick Rivers positively and brightly. "I know that as a fact, on the very best grounds possible."

"Might I ask you what affords you this absolute and infallible certainty?"

"Why," the young man replied, "I am sure, for the excellent reason that she does not know that I am rich; in fact, hasn't an idea that I have a penny to my name."

He looked smilingly and confidently across the breakfast table at his as-

tounded uncle.

"How can that be, with your name

"They don't know my name," announced Frederick Rivers triumphantly.
"They don't know at all who I am."

"Not know!" protested the stunned auditor. "With your picture in every other Sunday newspaper! 'Mr. Frederick Rivers embarking on his steam yacht, the Vaikunda." 'Mr. Frederick Rivers in his hundred-horse-power automobile.' 'Mr. Frederick Rivers watching his horse win.' Why, every young woman in every department shop in town knows exactly how you look, and dreams of you or your millions every night."

The way it happened is something of a story, but I can make it short. One evening, just at dark, I was leaving the

club-"

"The Amsterdam?"

"Yes."
"Humph!"

"There was ice on the pavement," the narrator continued, not cognizant of his uncle's significant exclamation, in the low tone in which it was uttered. "Suddenly I saw a slight, graceful figure. A young girl was walking rapidly ahead of me. As I watched her, she slipped, and fell lightly on the stone. No one was about. Of course, I ran at once to the rescue. The young lady's ankle was sprained so that she could only stand up by holding onto my arm."

The Cynic sniffed audibly.

"While she leaned against the wall to which she limped, with my help, I went back to the club cab stand. In a minute, with my assistance, she was in the conveyance. I explained that she might need me to aid her in getting to her door, and jumped in before she could object. I had seen her face—the sweetest, the most beautiful, in the world. She hardly spoke while we were on the way. At the house to which she wished to go, she took a most formal leave of me."

"Didn't she intimate that you might venture to come to ask how she was?"

"Certainly not."
"Strange."

"When I got into the cab to return, I found that, by accident, she had left—forgotten on the cushion—her muff."

"Certainly—naturally—of course," commented the Cynic, rubbing his hands like a connoisseur in enchantment before a work of art, though, at the same time, his brow lowered with anxiety.

"I took it back to her the next day, having great difficulty in being received. She thanked me ceremoniously, and then, as there was no other way of seeing her, I engaged some rooms which were vacant on the top floor of the house, under the name of James Walker."

"Moses and green spectacles!" exclaimed the Cynic, under his breath.

"By this means, I managed to speak to her almost daily, and by degrees she came to trust me—and—we are engaged."

"You believe," demanded the Cynic vigorously, "that she believes that you

are lames Walker?"

"Čertainly," continued the nephew blithely. "I am supposed to be a young inventor, with a patent for an automobile appliance. If," he chuckled, "I could only raise three hundred and fifty dollars for a working model, I could make my fortune. Glyn is so interested!"

"Of all the cock-and-bull stories—"
"Isn't it wonderful and delightful?"
"Wonderful that you can't see
through this trumped-up romance."
"Don't you believe it, Uncle Alec?"

"Why a baa-lamb would shy at it!

A self-evident confidence game."

"I can't have you speak in that way," his nephew interrupted gravely.

"To what are we coming?" broke forth the Cynic, rising, and pacing to and fro excitedly. "The greatest philosopher who ever lived was P. T. Barnum, when he said that the world liked to be fooled. In credulity, men are mere babes in their perambulator; only out of their mouths emphatically does not come truth. Your trustfulness, though, passes the bounds of sanity. You come here and tell me this fishy moonshine—"

"I was afraid that you might be a

little unreasonable at first."

"Unreasonable at first!" shouted the Cynic. "But—but I believe that they manage lunatics by humoring them."

"Oh, you will feel and think differently when you have seen Glyn," the nephew went on, with all a lover's security in the compelling power of the object of his affection.

"What did you say was the address?" The Cynic heard the number of a house on a cross street, which he quickly thought could not be far from Broad-

way.

"It is a romance," Mr. Frederick Rivers continued, with conviction. "There is so much that is interesting. Every little thing. For example, there was an old family portrait, an heir-loom——"

"Exactly," affirmed the Cynic. "The only thing lacking, the one touch needed to make the perfect whole—which they

wish to sell."

"They would not part with it for anything," declared Frederick Rivers decidedly. "It is of a Revolutionary ancestor, and for a long time they never thought that it had any particular value. Then suddenly they discovered that it was by Gilbert Stuart, and was a historical picture, which, as an example of early American art, any collector or museum would be glad to have."

"Oh, really, my dear boy--"

The Cynic paused for a moment to look out of the window; then he turned back to the table, and spoke decidedly.

"We must see about this."

"Another reason why I am here so early," continued his nephew, "is because I have to go out of town. I have to run up to Newport for a day to see Aunt Sophia. I want to tell her. Moreover, last week her horses took fright, and ran away for a short distance. Though they were at once safely stopped, the shock has upset her, and she has telegraphed that she would like to have me come."

"Yes, yes," urged the Cynic eagerly.
"Of course, you must go at once. The longer you stay with her, the better. Your sense of duty, your naturally kind heart, will immediately show you the propriety of such a course."

"The train starts in a half hour."

"You must not lose it, Think—your only aunt, who was so good to you when you were a boy. I'd join you myself, only she will want to see you alone, since you are the apple of her eye, and, at such a moment, when one is upset, one of course wants the apple of one's eye. You understand what I

mean. I confess that I am slightly agitated."

As he talked, he rang, and turned at Tibbits' entrance to address him hurriedly:

"Quick, go with Mr. Rivers! Find a cab for him. See that he does not miss his train. It's most important that he

should go in it."

He fairly drove his nephew from the room, pushing Tibbits after him, so that respectable servitor, much to his dismay, was jostled against the heir of all the mighty Rivers' fortune. Then the Cynic returned to pace the apartment backward and forward from wall to wall. His step was hasty, his whole mien distracted; nor, during the minutes he was alone before Tibbits returned, did he cease his hurried stride.

The Cynic walked slowly down the street, seeking carefully from house to house for the number.

"I might be Major Pendennis, going to see the Fotheringay." He chuckled as the thought struck him, and the com-

parison pleased him.

When halfway down the block, he became conscious of an individual who might be said to have been revealed to him by degrees, but in rapid stages. First, a necktie of surpassing brilliancy caught his sight; from this, his eyes traveled directly to the bright yellow gaiters above glittering patent-leather shoes. Returning, the next fact to arrest the attention was a purple and red waistcoat, of a large and frank pattern. Only by such gradual approach was the retiring subordination of the face finally attained-a broad, good-humored countenance, with a lax mouth, in which a cigarette rested easily.

"Lookin' for some one?" the personage inquired, as, reclining on the doorstep, in the sunshine, he watched the Cynic, who had paused below.

"Yes, if you live here, perhaps you can kindly inform me—since this appears to be the place. I am not fully advised as to the name—Miss Conyngham—Miss Lark—"

"Lark? Cert!" the other answered cordially. "Second door, second floor.

Good for a chorus. 'Second door, second floor.' Second, remember. The Queen of the Air's in the first. Lark's up there, all right, now," he continued encouragingly. "Trip straight along."

"I am very much indebted to you,"

murmured the Cynic.

"Forget it! My card. Dunn &

Grady.

Leaving the dual personality behind, the Cynic entered the dark hall. He was conscious for an instant of inspection from a tall and loosely clad female, who appeared for an instant in a doorway. The sharp slam with which the door shut clearly expressed disappointment, and conveyed to him the intelligence of his inadequacy as an object of interest.

At the upper landing, a single gas jet burning in full daylight held his attention unpleasantly. He passed the first portal, and, arriving at his destination, raised his hand, prepared to knock, when a step nearer in approach showed him that the way was open. Uncertainly he advanced, and very doubtfully looked into the apartment thus revealed. The furnishing was the scantiest.

If, however, objects of the rarest art had been before him, his glance would instantly have been led to a young girl sitting enthroned on a heavy, black, iron-bound trunk. That the young person had been crying was evident, both from her attitude, with bent head, and from the guilty speed with which she attempted to conceal her handkerchief the instant that she became aware of inspection. Also, the drops which hung on her long, curling lashes attested it, and, in truth, the pinkness of her cheeks and even slightly of her wonderful little nose, which stopped at precisely and exactly the right instant, contributed further to establish the fact.

The Cynic was fairly amazed by her surprising prettiness. A chic Greek goddess, supposing such a thing ever existed, despondent as Calypso, on that prosaic piece of luggage in that grim room, could not have astonished him

more.

"The baggage!" he muttered, refer-

ring to the young lady, and not to the trunk.

"I thought you would never come."
She looked up, looked at him, and continued to look surprisedly.

"I supposed," she went on, after a moment of this puzzled inspection, "that you would be somebody quite different." Then she added: "I am awfully glad, for I feel at once that I can trust you, depend on you."

"Indeed!" gasped the Cynic.

"It's a word one always hesitates about using, but there isn't any other. I'm so glad that you're—a gentleman."

"Thank you," the Cynic stammered.
"I'm in such a hurry, for I've got to
go immediately. Here is the money.
You will take this, please?" With swift
fingers, she drew a roll of bank notes
from some inner treasury beneath the
laces of her throat. "There are three
hundred and fifty dollars."

"Really—" the Cynic began, backing away from the proffered currency.

"What is the matter? Haven't they told you? Don't you know why you were to come here?" she hurried on. "Then I shall have to explain: There is some one to whom I want to have some money given, without his knowing that it comes from me. Mr. James Walker, who lives in this house—"

"You want to give money to Mr. James Walker, who lives in this house?" repeated the Cymic, in a dazed tone.

"He is an inventor. He has an appliance for an automobile, and he needs the money to use for having a working model made. I have been told that you will arrange this. I want to have the money given to him, so that he will believe that it comes from some capitalist who is willing to advance it to him on the strength of his invention."

"Why don't you give it to him yourself?" the Cynic demanded, seeking about for a chair, but not sitting down when he had discovered one.

"He would not take it. I suppose I had better tell you the whole story. One tells everything to one's legal adviser, and that's what I suppose you are. You can act better if you understand all about it. He has asked me to marry

him, but I have taken an engagement with a summer opera company in a Western city, and I am going away, where he will not know where I am."

"Why?" burst forth the Cynic.
"Because, if you must know the truth, I love him too much to be a burden and an incumbrance to him just now. Perhaps when his invention succeeds, or I have made a position on the stage—"She paused, and proceeded swiftly: "He would not let me go if he knew that I was going now. He would follow me if he knew where I was going." She was visibly near tears again. "I want to use the money I got by selling the picture for him."

"The Gilbert Stuart?"

"Yes. You do know something about it"

"The picture was real, after all?"

"Of course it was!" she exclaimed. "What can have made you imagine that it was not?"

"And you have sold it to get money for him?"

"Why, I have just told you --"

"And you are going away—running away from him?"

"Yes," she said, gazing at him with open-eyed astonishment.

"Will you allow me to sit down?" asked the Cynic.

She did not answer, but looked a haughty permission for him to do as he liked.

"I don't know what to say," he observed, gazing about as if he had lost all confidence in the testimony of his

"Why do you have to say anything? I have given you the instructions. You are truly," she averred critically, "the strangest lawyer I ever saw."

"Lawyer?"

"Why, aren't you Mr. Sill, who came to arrange what I wanted?"

"You really believe I am?" stated the Cynic, with increasing amazement. "Naturally," she answered, staring at

him indignantly.

"And this is not," the Cynic reflected aloud, in his perplexity, "some part of a—professional impersonation carried

into real life? This is not a comedy, played for my benefit?"

"Are you not," she demanded directly and concisely, with doubt at last in her tone, "Mr. Simon Sill, who was sent to me by Mr. Leroy Rivington?"

"Leroy Rivington!" cried the Cynic.
"The president of the Amsterdam?"
"Certainly," she replied firmly. "Mr.

"Certainly," she replied firmly. "Mr. Leroy Rivington, my mother's first cousin, whom I asked to recommend to me a lawyer for a small business matter, and who said he would send you—if you are Mr. Sill——"

"Is there," interrupted the Cynic, standing up, "is there a telephone in this

house?

"Yes. If you will speak to the land-

"Thank you—a moment," he said, turning to the door.

The square of sunlight from the window had moved scarcely an inch along the worn and frayed carpet when the Cynic returned. His "entrance," from any theatrical point of view, was sadly lacking in dramatic effect. He advanced slowly, with rather a thoughtful expression, which might even have been taken to indicate a certain degree of embarrassment and dismay. At least, he looked apprehensively and contritely toward the small figure upon the large trunk. The constraint which he appeared to experience in finding words was most unusual.

"I—I beg your pardon," he began, at length, abruptly holding out his hand.

"Yes," she answered coldly, suspiciously, and with great stateliness, as she extended her fingers in a very reluctant manner.

"You see," he said, "I came to scoff. I have remained to—surrender."

"I simply don't understand you at all," she replied, her eyes studying him in a way that he found hard to bear.

"I don't know that I quite understand myself. See here," he exclaimed, "why didn't you say anything about Mr. Leroy Rivington before?"

"Why should I?" she asked calmly.
"To be sure, why should you? Why
does anybody say anything? Of course,

one should take it for granted that all geese are swans, that everything that glitters is gold, that angels are entertained unawares every day, and that the only wise thing to do is to leap in the dark, with your eyes shut. I'll admit that there is no fool like an old fool. How my nephew——"

"Your nephew!" she cried, jumping up, in the prettiest confusion. "You

are lim's uncle?"

"Not Jim. But never mind. Why

didn't he tell me-"

"Why didn't you tell me?" she flashed

back, with sufficient fire.

"Because I will confess that I was a spy, in what I thought was an enemy's country. My rôle, though, is changed. Leroy Rivington, one of my best friends, and one of the stanchest old conservatives in town, informs me that everything is true. Therefore, since you love the boy-I can't see how that commonplace young fellow has managed to get you to do it-why, good heavens, take him! Here have the family and myself been making our days miserable, and disturbing our sleep, because we were afraid that some one would marry him for his money, and lead him a pretty dance afterward."

"You really believe it! That's the beauty of it. Why, all we ask is to have him tied up safely to a nice, pretty, well-brought-up girl like you, who takes

him for himself."

But Jim is poor."

She looked at him doubtfully, as if uncertain whether he had gone out of

his wits.

"You need not be afraid," he assured her. "I think that I am in my right mind. The trouble is that I am not positive that I always have been. It's all so upsetting, overthrowing, subverting of preconceived ideas. It's disconcerting, distracting, and bewildering. If only that young idiot—I beg his pardon; that sagacious young Solomon—had not gone off to see his Aunt Sophia—"

A slight sound attracted the Cynic's attention. Glancing about, he discovered his nephew, Mr. Frederick Rivers,

standing in the doorway.

"No," said the Cynic slowly, "I am not surprised at seeing you. Nothing surprises me. Nothing is ever going to surprise me again. My ideas have all been askew, when I thought that it was the world that was out of joint."

"At the minute I was starting," explained his nephew, "a telegram came from Aunt Sophia, saying that she was coming to New York. Therefore, I can tell her of my engagement when she arrives, and this is very kind of you, Uncle Alec, to come to see Glyn at once."

"No, it isn't. No, it isn't. You'll understand it wasn't. Never mind now. I—my dear—Glyn—I suppose I may call you that?—if you will take my card to your mother, as the oldest and nearest relative of this young gentleman, I should like at once to make a formal request for your hand, and explain a good deal that has to be explained."

"Mamma is not here," Glyn replied.
"She has gone to stay on Long Island, at Mrs. Pomfret's place, Whitewalls. Mrs. Pomfret's mother, Mrs. Randolph Preston, who used to be a schoolmate

of mamma's, is there."

"Mrs. 'Willy' Pomfret!" murmured the Cynic. "Wonders will never cease. I shall certainly run down to Whitewalls in the motor this afternoon, have the honor of seeing Mrs. Conyngham, and ask her consent to this marriage."

"But I don't understand," said Glyn

perplexedly.

"Fred will explain."

"Fred?" she asked, wrinkling her smooth, low brow.

"Fred, to be sure. Fred—not Jim. He will tell you all about it. I am going. I think this is the place where, if you will kindly fall on your knees before me, I should say, with a tear suffusing my eye: 'Bless you, my children!'"

"You are going-Uncle Alec?" Glyn

demanded mischievously.

"Yes, my young lady," the Cynic answered, "going—why, even to get married myself, if any one will have me. I can't show a greater confidence in the world than by that."



ever open, and through which he took in hard cash by the tens of thousands every working day. He glanced at the green and vellow sheaves he had counted and stacked for the vault; then brought his fist down angrily on the narrow shelf on which the money lay, and on which he never got a chance to rest an elbow, and said, with earnestness unusual in him:

"It isn't fair! It isn't fair!"

A face lifted from another narrow shelf in another steel cage, and, had Robert Mercer been observing, he might have seen that the face bore the impress of a type remarkably akin to his own. For they do run to types in the steel cages and behind the crescent wickets that yawn interminably, and are never satisfied.

"What isn't fair, Bob?"

But Robert Mercer only scowled in

glum silence.

"Old man grumpy as ever, eh, Bob? No worse for you than the rest of ushe's hell bent on being stingy. Only thing, Bob, is to keep on hammering. He's bound to open his tight fist in the long run."

"Yes, he'll open it!" said Robert Mercer, expressing in his irony all the bit-

terness he felt.

The face so like Robert Mercer's own

bent down to watch nimble fingers run through a clinking pile of gold. Mercer peered sharply at the man at work; suddenly swept the green and yellow stack into his crooked arm, and left his steel cage, and took the marble steps down to the big vault, of glistening interior, and with ten-ton door swinging to the touch of a finger.

After a few moments, when Robert Mercer came out, without any apparent reason, he sent the door back a foot

or two.

"How nicely adjusted it is!" he muttered between close lips; and went up the marble stairs with light, quick steps, notwithstanding the heaviness of his

"So long, you old slow coaches!" called Robert Mercer, in bantering pretense to those of his fellow toilers still imprisoned in their respective steel cages. He dismissed the volley of sharp retorts with a wave of his hand, and stepped out into the light of day. He joined the stream pouring over to Broadway; he went down with the current into the gloom and reek of the subway. And during the rush of the express northward he sat crushed down in a corner, alternately trembling in apprehension or thrilling in elation. As he emerged again into the May sunshine, he paused long enough to exchange a quarter for six carnations. He almost ran up the steep grade. He quickened his pace as he turned the corner. He rushed into the hall of the

apartment house-one of the common

variety, pretentious only in name.

It was one flight up—two windows on a side street, five on a court. He signaled by two short, quick rings. He let the door swing shut behind him. He heard the glad voice. In an instant he was down the gloomy hall and in the cramped parlor.

"How are you, Nell?" were his eager words, as he dropped on his knees beside the slight figure in low rocker near

the window.

Slender arms wound lovingly around

Robert Mercer's shoulders.

"Ever so much better, Rob, dear. Oh, it's good to have you home. And flowers!"

"A few carnations, Nell."

"I love them."

Robert Mercer left the flowers in his wife's hands, drew up a chair, and seated himself in front of her.

"I have something to tell you, Nell."

"Good news, Rob?"
"I've got it at last."
"The raise, Rob?"

"Yes-the raise-twenty dollars a week."

The wife let the flowers fall neglect-

ed in her lap.

"Twenty dollars a week—one thousand dollars a year! And I didn't dare pray for more than five a week, Rob!"

"No more did I, Nell."

Robert Mercer sat silent while tears—tears of thankfulness—coursed down

his wife's cheeks.

"We'll clear off the furniture; we'll pay every cent, Rob! In a year we'll have our little house. And I'll have the hammock on the veranda, and you'll have the garden, with all the lettuces and cabbages."

"You bet! That's just what we'll have!" said Robert Mercer, bringing

himself to his feet.

"Tell me how you did it, Rob?"

"Wait a little, Nell. When we get to the Point—is that too far for you?"

"Not a bit, Rob," laughed Nell, and, for proof, lifted herself lightly. "I feel fit for anything at present."

"Guess I'll wheel Jimsey."

"Jimsey is with his auntie, Rob. I have you all alone for the afternoon,"

Nell Mercer leaned on her husband's arm as they passed down the lane of tall, majestic oaks, and went out on the rocky point. They found seats at the water's edge. The trees behind shut out the city. The Hudson lay in front, a mile across, and flowing like molten silver.

"Now tell me, Rob," urged Nell, and

sighed in absolute contentment.

 Robert Mercer shot a glance at the delicate, almost fragile, face of his wife.
 Then his eyes set firmly, without sign of shrinking or retreat.

"I made up my mind on the way downtown, Nell. It was in the *Times* that the bank had declared a dividend

of thirty-three per cent."

Robert Mercer paused at the thought of injustice.

"Yes, Rob?" led his wife, and smiled

encouragement.

"When I read that, I decided it was up to me to make Waldeck play fair." Robert Mercer looked into his wife's face, and laughed—laughed bitterly. "Why, Nell, I felt like sinking my fingers in his throat. That's God's truth—Waldeck grinds me and all the rest of us under his heel. It all rushed in on me—in a minute I realized that if I didn't make him play fair he'd grind the very life out of me."

"Oh, Rob, you know Mr. Waldeck

wouldn't do that!"

Robert Mercer picked up a pebble from between his feet, and flung it into the river.

"There's what Waldeck would do, Nell, He'd let me go to the bottom like

that stone."

"Please don't talk so harshly, Rob!" entreated his wife. "It's so unlike you,

dear.'

"I know that, Nell; but it's not my fault. What was I to do? He'd refused me every month for six months. An end had to come to it. I just decided I'd go to him, and I'd get my raise, or something would break."

Nell looked at her husband in ad-

miration.

"Now you have said something that

pleases me, Rob. You had the courage —I never could be so brave."

Robert Mercer drew away when his wife leaned toward him.

"There was no bravery in it. It was simple justice." He shifted squarely around. "When I'd balanced up my books, I went straight to him—not timidly, cringingly, as he always seems to expect. He was putting on his automobile coat, and he glowered at me. 'Well, what is it?' he asked, in his superior way. I didn't keep him waiting, Nell. I said: 'I want more money.'"

"You put it as bluntly as that, Rob?" "I did. And he knew I meant business. He sat down at his desk very deliberately, as he always does when he's thinking. 'You were in one month ago?' he said. 'I was, Mr. Waldeck,' I said. 'And I was in two months ago, and three—and what has it all brought me? I can't live on pleasant words, Mr. Waldeck!' He smiled at me, Nell; smiled as I've often told you-like a fox. 'I've always thought we treat our men liberally, he said. 'Now, if you were across the street, in the—' He were across the street, in thegot no further, Nell. I couldn't stand another word. 'I handle money by the million for your bank, Mr. Waldeck,' I shouted, 'and you don't pay me the wages of a first-class mechanic."

"You dared to say that, Rob?" Robert Mercer sprang to his feet, resolution in his whole attitude.

"I said it, Nell; yes, I said it. And that wasn't all. I told him he expected me to be half satisfied with the distinction of working for him. I told him his bank gave me a position to maintain. I told him he wanted me to be a gentleman on a laboring man's pay."

"Oh, Rob! Were you not afraid he would discharge you?"

"What if he had? Anything would be better than sticking in that rut. He raised one hand. He began to talk and talk; he tried to steer me off. He kept me silent for a minute—then I thought of you, Nell. I thought of you, out of the hospital, and needing to go away, as the doctor has been telling me, and telling me!"

Nell touched her husband's hand with gentle fingers,

"All doctors are alarmists, Rob. I

don't need to go away."

"Yes, you do," said Robert Mercer, almost savagely. "And I told Waldeck that. I shouted it at him—in his face, I shouted it. I asked him if he wanted to be responsible for the death of my wife. That cooled him; that brought him to his senses. What do you think, Nell?" continued Robert Mercer, in changed tone. "Waldeck took me by the hand. He said: 'I understand, Mercer.' And then—and then, Nell—he raised me twenty dollars a week."

Nell Mercer sat with head cast down. Her husband, looking at her, for the first time felt uneasy.

"I hated to do it that way, Nell," he hastened. "I forgot myself—I was carried away. And wasn't it all true? You were the one he made suffer, Nell."

A sad smile flitted across Nell Mercer's face. Slowly she raised her head, and gazed at her husband with a look he never could understand.

"It's all right, Rob," she said, in allforgiving tenderness. "It's all right, and I am so glad; only—only, Rob, it is not I that has been made to suffer."

"What do you mean, Nell?"
Mean? Robert Mercer could not guess; had his wife told him, he would not have realized. For he had not eyes to see himself, to see that the marks were plain and unmistakable—in the dry thinning of his hair; in the stoop of his shoulders; in the flattening of his chest; in the deadness of his step; in the monotony of his voice; in the cruel sameness of the adding machine stamped all over him.

Robert Mercer did not know, but his wife knew—she had watched those marks grow. And she knew likewise that there was no more reliable, no more faithful cog in the great machine of the Freemen's National than the man she loved and who was her husband. Also, she knew he deserved vastly more. Had he not worked up from office boy? Had he not risen step by step, gone up a little year by year, worked early and late in splendid loyalty? Yes, he had done all

that and more—done it cheerfully on a pittance. The reward was coming. How sure Robert Mercer—and his wife—

had been of that!

It was all very vivid before Nell Mercer's mind's eye just now. They had married mostly on hope. They had dreamed together, and now what had they? Rob was thirty-five, and he still had a pittance! Often and often had she thought it would take only a few crumbs of encouragement to save him ambition. Often and often had she felt the force of Rob's word that one-tenth of one per cent, of one quarterly dividend would ease the load on all the clerks, big and little. Often and often, too, had she confessed to herself Rob spoke truth when he said fat bankers didn't care how their lean clerks lived.

Nell Mercer was brought back to herself by the pressure of a hand over her

own.

"So, you see, Nell, all I have to tell is that you got the raise, and not I. It was you kept me from going down like a stone."

The wife smiled bravely, and tossed her head, as if shaking off misgiving.

"Here I am gloomy, instead of happy, and—Rob, I won't have you say that. You know I had nothing to do with it. And you know Mr. Waldeck would not raise you a dollar unless he was sure of a return. Isn't that true, Rob?"

"It is, and it isn't," quibbled the man.
"It is the truth—you know it for the truth, Rob." Tenderly she drew him down, and rested her head against him. "Let's forget everything except our two selves here together. Look up, Rob! We've got riches! Isn't it good we've got as much air as any one? Isn't it good God puts no price on His sunshine?"

Robert Mercer lifted his face to the blue void.

"God never intended the world to be what it is, and I know there are some who may not be ashamed to go to Him for forgiveness."

"He forgives all," said Nell rever-

ently.

"All! Everybody!" Robert Mercer

threw out a ringing laugh, and swept his arm around. "What could be better than this—the woods, and the water, and the sky? It's grand, isn't it, Nell?"

"Glorious, Rob!"

Nell put the doctor in good humor by taking the trip he had ordered, and she returned bright of eye and rosy of cheek. And her heart was light-as light as the voice she gave out in happy song. It had come easy sailing. No more pinching; no more squeezing and scraping. In cold business terms, the firm of Mercers & Son was declaring a dividend as well as the Freemen's National. Not a big dividend, of course; but still a dividend, and not a deficit; and that in itself was something to merit jubilation. Pity the poor collector who, by accident, now knocked on the Mercer door! Such visitation belonged in another and harsher day.

After all, the years of struggling and of hoping had not been in vain. Why, Nell now could dream as she had been wont to dream before the brutal, merciless facts of hand-to-mouth existence had made her fear her own imagination. Yes, yes; they would have the cottage, with the hammock on the veranda, and the garden with the lettuces and cab-

bages.

Aye, and still more, Nell could look far along the years, and they were all golden. She had only to shut her eyes to see herself in that cottage door, awaiting the wild rush of her Jimsey—her big, manly, tow-headed Jimsey—first time home from college, Oh, to contemplate the future now was for Nell to dwell in unalloyed rapture. And, come to it, was it vain on Nell's part to burnish up the old, neglected dream that the Freemen's National simply was bound to have a Mercer as president? Vain to do that? A thousand times no!

Now then, what's to come out of it? Easy to answer, and you know as well as I. It was a big price to pay, but at least he had obeyed the doctor's order. And was it so very strange that Robert Mercer felt satisfied when he saw Nell's bloom restored? For his own sake, he

never would have let up for a moment in the fight against the current; for his wife's sake—well, that was different. Then it seemed so easy to deceive, and there always was the hope of something turning up for him to pay back.

Robert Mercer still was hoping when the inevitable day arrived. Nell received the unbelievable message by telephone; she never knew how she went downtown, or found her husband in the Tombs. Rob—her Rob—a thief? It was a lie—a mean, cowardly lie. She never would believe otherwise—never, never, never! And, thank One merciful to us men, wives are just that way. For if they were not, if they did not have faith, what would happen when the common clay of which we Robert Mercers are made runs to mire?

The world paused for a moment to scoff; then, with the wink and the shrug of the hypocrite, passed on. And when his turn came, Robert Mercer lied like a man-it was all he could do, the only return he could make for Nell's utterly simple faith. She was at his side every minute in the courtroom; she patted him, kissed him, prayed to him to bear up, when the verdict was told. And still she did not leave him, but sat beside him when, handcuffed, he was taken northward in the train. She held his hand all the way up the steep hillside; at the portal-the dread portalshe wound her arms around him,

"You're my husband, Rob. I won't let you go—I won't—I won't—I won't!" It was not until she felt a firm, though kindly, grip on her shoulder that she realized how useless it was. One last embrace, one last kiss, and Nell stood alone. She watched the iron door open, watched her husband walk in, heard the door clank, and the bolt go home. What did it mean? In anguish, Nell Mercer beat with clenched hands on the iron door. But iron doors do not open to burning hearts.

Nell soon found out that it is on the wife left behind that the real punishment falls. She did not pine over it; there was no yellow streak in Nell. She resolved to fight; Nell was made of right valiant stuff. She fought hard,

fought nobly; and just succeeded in keeping her head above the whirling waters. Perhaps she would have gone under had she paused for thought of herself; perhaps the waters would have shut in over her had she not thought often of a stone Rob once had cast out.

With the Freemen's National paying its pittance elsewhere, there was nothing left for Nell, except to live by the strength, and likewise the weakness, of her hands. And she did it, too; don't you think for a minute Nell didn't. Wasn't there Jimsey to keep? Wasn't there Rob's honor to safeguard? Rob's honor! Yes, just that: Rob's honor beyond the shadow of a doubt.

It was a long, stern battle, and—hello! What's this? Why, you poky one, it's the sun peeping out. Bells ringing, children laughing, men and women singing, the world dancing—its jolly old self again! Reason? Ask Nell Mercer the reason, and her smiles will tell you her Rob is coming home.

Now, when she looked back, it seemed as if the days had flown on wings. She had the table set; his napkin ring was so bright it glistened. She did not hear a sound of Jimsey's prattle. She prayed he would—and he did! The bell rang twice.

Neither thought it necessary to speak a word. Perhaps they couldn't. They stood in each other's arms, just inside the door, for a full minute. Then Nell led him down the hall and into the cramped parlor by the hand. She looked at him in the white glare of the gas lamp; her heart leaped when she saw a new Rob had come home. His hair might be thinner, but his shoulders were square, and his chest was full and broad: his voice had confidence in it; his feet were firmly on the ground. It was plain to Nell that the impress of the machine had been brushed clean away. Rob Mercer had learned. Adversity, at times, is a kind teacher, and adversity had been kind to Rob.

He took Jimsey on his knee.
"You've grown inches, kiddie," said
Jimsey's father.

Nell was all flutter, all excitement, as she spread the feast. With great

ceremony, Jimsey was tucked in; then, once more in the cramped parlor, Robert Mercer's face fell grave and resolute. He pushed aside the gas lamp, crossed his arms on the round table, and looked across at his wife.

"Nell," said Robert Mercer, "I'm a

thief!"

Nell could hardly lift her head.

"A thief? A thief? You—you—you, Rob? You mean it? You—you—you—you—"

Nell could go no further. The woe of the past was a trifle against the woe

of the present.

"I'm a thief, Nell," repeated Robert Mercer.

"Oh! Oh!" was all Nell Mercer could utter.

She strained out her arms, clasped hands in the center of the table. Her head sank down; her eyes roved, without seeing. Nell wanted to cry, to shout, to scream; but she couldn't. There was something in her throat that burned and choked. She moved her head despairingly. She had thought God was kind—yet her happiness was plucked from her

again.

"I had to tell you, Nell—it's true." True? Good God! Nell turned up her palms. There was part of the story. She used to take a woman's pride in her hands; Rob used to laugh, and say he might not have married her only for her hands. Now look! And other marks, too, deeper than any she ever had seen on him. And she had borne all gleefully. She had stood out against an unbelieving world. Yes, she had believed—believed with heart and soul! And now—now he was a thief!

She grew conscious of a grasp on her

wrist.

"Don't touch me!"

She tried to pull away, but the grip strengthened to her effort, and she let her arm lie.

"Nell, I thought it was for the best. Men in my fix always say that, so don't take it as an excuse. I've no excuse. I'm just a thief." Nell drew back as his face went near her. "I stole, and then I lied, Nell. I lied when I said I was honest—deceived you even in that."

Nell struggled in his grasp.

"Listen to me, my wife: I might have come here to you, and gone on living a lie. But I couldn't, Nell—I couldn't. I thought of you in my cell at night. You were too good—I had to tell you."

"You shouted at Mr. Waldeck-what

about that?"

"All that was true, Nell—all except the raise."

Nell groped in darkness.

"What are you going to do?" Robert Mercer stood up.

"There is only one thing I can do, Nell. I can't ask you to live with a thief."

"Oh, God, God!" grieved Nell Mercer, and swayed from side to side, her face pressed in her hands.

Robert Mercer went around the table,

and upturned his wife's face.

"Good-by, Nell," he said, and kissed her once, twice, on the lips.

She only sobbed when he went down

he hall.

"Rob!" she called, when his hand was on the door.

Robert Mercer came back. Nell was standing beside the table. The tips of her fingers drew down on her checks. Her lips were wide. Her eyes held a strange look,

Her husband did not speak. She began to go slowly to him. She felt a great hunger in her heart. She felt a terrible yearning, a terrible frailty. She looked up into his face. She saw life there

"Do you love me, Rob?"

"I love you, Nell."

With a convulsive sob, she threw herself in his arms.

"That's all I care about. I love you, Rob!"





THE DOG AT HIS GATE David King



HY, if Teddy Roosevelt were to come along here leading a gold-mounted, diamond-collared dog by a rope of pearls, the landlord of this litle rural

Waldorf would turn him away until the beast had been securely tied in the woods across the road. Even then he'd worry about the rope's holding power, and he'd be just as well satisfied if his distinguished guest moved on to the next hotel."

"Doesn't he like the colonel?" I asked, refusing to understand.

"Likes the colonel well enough, but he doesn't like dogs. He's a regular crank on the subject and—"

My veranda companion had thrown a dash of cold water over my enthusiasm at having found, after weeks of search, the one sweet, clean, green nook in all the Jersey hills that seemed perfect. A few days' trial had satisfied me that in The Oaks I had found an ideal summer home, and I was on the point of packing back to the city to bring on my lares and penates when the remark of my fellow sojourner brought the discouraging information that a certain four-footed friend, far from being welcome, would not be tolerated on the premises.

In considering my own comfort, I had not been unmindful of what could be done for the well-being of Sir Rodney, my prize English bulldog, at the moment panting in the light well of a Manhattan apartment house; I had looked up the various roads and lanes

where a man and his dog might find joy in morning strolls together, and I had approached the hostler as to Sir Rodney's occupancy of a box stall in the stables; but, curiously enough, I had said nothing to the proprietor on the subject.

In our travels we had been welcomed, Roddy and I, at scores of fine hotels; at Madison Square Garden within the month, Sir Rodney, proud of his blue ribbons and in perfect ecstasies of affection, had been petted and caressed by hundreds of stylishly dressed women and little children, so it had not occurred to me that my blue-blooded, titled pet might be excluded from the premises of a country hotel, and refused such modest accommodation as he required. Of course the man did

"Hates a dog like the devil hates holy water," continued my acquaintance of the veranda, "and you can bet all the dogs in these parts know it. Just look at that!"

not know good, brave, kind, sweet-tem-

pered Sir Rodney.

As he spoke, a high-stepping bird dog rounded a point on the road a few hundred feet away, stopped, and, after a careful survey of the hotel grounds, dropped his tail, and slunk into the woods on a wide detour as though he had read a thousand poison warnings.

"And yet," pursued the man, "I never knew him to harm a dog—don't believe he ever did, beyond occasionally hurting one's feelings with his peremptory orders to clear out—and I've known him to severely criticize others for abusing them. He certainly hates the canine race, but he's too good a man to be actually unkind to them. Now, he loves horses and——"

I was gone, in search of the landlord, framing a special plea and regretting that the handsome, friendly Sir Rodney was not there to speak for himself; he had never failed to win the love and confidence of those timid humans who had taken time to glance beyond his gnarled and broken face into the brown depths of his great, honest eyes; and dog lovers and little children had always gone to him, instinctively knowing that behind the forbidding wrinkles and the sinisterlike jaws he carried a gentle heart.

"No use at all to argue the matter," said mine host decisively; "I wouldn't allow my own brother to keep a plaster of paris dog around this place! If you insist upon having your dog with you, I shall simply have to ask you for your room."

He had said other equally emphatic things—enough, with his last speech, to convince me that the man was proof against any fire that my small-bore reasoners could maintain, and that it would be a waste of ammunition to attempt further his conversion; he could see neither sentimental nor economic value in the dog. Almost from the first I had abandoned hope of getting Sir Rodney past his embargo, but I had been aroused by the man's admission that he was training his children after his own idea, and that they were growing up in fear if not actual hatred of dogs.

We had engaged in heated argument, for I had known too many faithful, noble dogs, and I knew too well the place in the child heart held by the "Watches," the "Rovers," and the "Jacks" to remain silent after such wholesale slander. It was useless, and

I was getting out.

The man who first warned me was on the veranda when I emerged with my grips at the end of my interview with the landlord.

"Tell you what you can do," he said,

understanding the reason for my going. "You can get your dog boarded at a farmhouse down the road a quarter of a mile; man here last summer made such an arrangement, and had his dog with him every day on his rambles."

It was the solution of my problem— I need not give up my new-found paradise, and Sir Rodney could have one of

his own.

An hour later I had concluded arrangements with the farmer for Sir Rodney's summer keep under conditions best calculated to delight the canine soul, and was on my way back to hot, stifling Bedlam. In due time we were settled in our respective country homes, both as well conditioned as man and

beast might ever hope to be.

To one thing I had fully made up my mind. The children of the household, particularly little Elizabeth Ann, who, though she had been distant and uppish since she learned that I possessed a dog, had quite won my heart, should be delivered from the blind depths of their unreasonable and unnatural prejudice against man's only real friend among all the denizens of the earth. No plan had presented, and I had no idea of interfering with the family's program—I had merely made my resolve without thought of means to carry it out or the ethics involved.

It was a week before I ventured to take Sir Rodney near the hotel; then one morning I left him by the roadside in front while I went to my room to fetch some forgotten article: When I returned, the landlord stood in the middle of the walk leading from the road, and Sir Rodney, planted squarely on all four feet, stood facing him; man and dog gazed so intently into each other's eyes that the tension was not broken by my approach, though the dog's screwlike tail wagged politely in recognition of my presence; there was nothing in his face but inquiry, wonderment-as if he would ask: "What manner of man is this who challenges a friend?" The man, quite evidently relieved from an embarrassing position, made no reply to my suggestion that they should be friends, and walked

away muttering something about fools and nuisances.

After the manner of little boys and old men, I talked to my dog as we walked along, tried to tell him about the man he had met, but somehow felt that he already knew and was not interested. It did not occur to me at the time that he might have met the bird dog. Afterward I told him all about Elizabeth Ann, and as we went through the woods and fields pointed out to him the blossoms that she most resembled.

Elizabeth Ann and Sir Rodney met by accident under circumstances most discouraging to my hopes. The child with her brother had been gathering flowers in a back meadow, and we met them blossom-laden at a sharp turn in a path through the woods not far from

the hotel.

Sir Rodney, delighted almost out of his glistening hide, began a series of canine obeisances that would have reassured any one at all acquainted with his kind, but his friendly overtures were worse than wasted on the two chil-Terror possessed them the instant Sir Rodney's tawny form appeared, and while it gave wings to the boy's feet it held the little girl rooted to the spot, her body describing paroxysms of fear, her face purple and distorted in the madness of hysteria.

In an instant I had lifted her to my shoulder, and was pouring forth a flood of reassurance; but, though at my command, the puzzled and disappointed dog had taken himself to a distance, there was no stopping the nervequake that shook her little form—I was helpless. When the reaction came, the child lay limp and white in my arms, in her eyes a curious stare that struck my heart cold-no tears, no sobs-just the quiet,

blank stare of a bisque doll.

Running, stumbling, praying, not daring to look again at my precious burden. I was halfway to the house when I met the frantic father, followed at a little distance by the boy; the lad's incoherent report of the meeting in the path had left little doubt in the father's mind that his babe was being torn to pieces, and when he saw me racing toward him,

bearing her apparently lifeless form, his worst fears were confirmed.

Just what followed has never been quite clear in my mind; I recall that my heart went out to the man when I saw that he was afraid to look at the still, white bundle in my arms, and that I turned away in desperation when I could not make him hear or understand my explanations. Pistol shots, followed by little cries of surprise and pain, rang out at my back, but I did not turn to protest, though I half expected to be the next target. Screaming women ran up; the child was snatched from my arms and borne away in a perfect gale of excitement, leaving the good Sir Rodney and me branded as murderers.

Sir Rodney! I had last seen him running at my side, trying to understand the new game, wondering why the little girl did not get down and play with him. Now he stood at the bend in the road looking back reproachfully; I could see that one of his legs hung limp, and that his snowy breast had turned

Half an hour later, to my unutterable relief, a physician announced that Elizabeth Ann was rapidly recovering from her nervous shock, and that after a day or two there would be no ill effects except, possibly, an increased fear of dogs. Then I went down the road to the farmhouse, swearing as I ran.

My position at The Oaks was anything but comfortable during the following few weeks, but I could not well move my wounded pet, and I had determined not to be run away by black looks and the knowledge that I was not

welcome.

My story of the meeting on the path had been confirmed by the boy's revised version, and both had been verified by Elizabeth Ann, but if he felt any regret for his hasty action in shooting my dog. the man gave no sign, and the subject never came up in our rare and extremely brief periods of intercourse. Had he needlessly harmed any other creature, I am sure he would have offered amends, but a dog!

Soon I became aware that because of my attendance upon and devotion to the suffering animal at the farmhouse, some of my fellow guests had dubbed me variously "Nursie" and "Doctor"; I was growing bitter in the thought that I had fallen into a nest of hard hearts when a rift of sunshine suddenly burst through the clouds.

Little Elizabeth Ann leaned close to me one evening as I sat musing moodily, and said, her voice full of sympathy:

"I'm sorry for the poor, hurted dog-

gie, and I wisht he'd get well."

I leaned over, and kissed her yellow head; then, drawing her close, I told her all about Sir Roddy—from the time when he was a puppy and lived with a kitten in an old cream freezer down to his triumph at Madison Square when fine ladies came to see him; told her of his kind heart—how, remembering his first little friend, he had never harmed a kittie, how he loved all the little boys and girls, and wanted them to love him.

I fold her many stories about dogs, but she wanted to know more about Sir Rodney, and when her nurse came to take her to bed she whispered that she would say a little prayer for him. I was saying one for Elizabeth Ann as

she went away.

It was the child's own ideas of fairness—justice—that had moved her to sympathy for the wounded dog; she knew in her heart that the animal was innocent of any intention of harming her, that he had been friendly and merely wanted to play, and she knew that because of her fears and her outery he had been cruelly hurt and might die; young as she was, she felt a certain personal responsibility for his plight, and she had reasoned out her duty.

From then on her inquiries became concurrent with my visits to the farmhouse, and daily more solicitous. One day she brought me a pretty box with the announcement that it was for the sick doggie; on opening it, I found that the box was stuffed with cake of her own making; no member of the family, save the mother, knew of its destination, and I was pledged to secrecy.

Then came the happy day when Elizabeth Ann, with the knowledge and consent of her mother, went to see Sir Rod-

ney. For weeks she had pled that she might go, and there were no misgivings on my part; the little mother heart within her had awakened to the cry of suffering, and the nightmare of fear had vanished. She marched up to the bulldog and took his head in her arms, and he, gentleman that he was, instantly forgot that she was the same little girl who had snubbed him on the path and caused all his troubles.

Sir Rodney had a deep and real love for children; all summer he had been deprived of their society, and now his joy knew no bounds. For an hour the new friends played, and then, vigorously protesting. I took Elizabeth Ann away; poor Sir Rodney was exhausted, the little girl's hat was wrecked, and her frock was torn, but she was happy.

Elizabeth Ann and Sir Rodney never played together again; when next she went to see him, the poor fellow could scarcely raise his head, and before we could arrange another journey to the farmhouse the man had put such an effectual quietus upon our little game of happiness that we had abandoned it.

The cool of autumn greatly revived Sir Rodney, and though he was still very thin and lame I had strong hopes for his recovery. True, his blue-ribbon days were over, but I was satisfied with his honest friendship, and was finding joy in the returning twinkle of his eyes, in each evidence of renewed strength. It's curious how a man gets wrapped up in his dog; and yet not so strange when one stops to consider how a dog gets wrapped up in his master.

Sir Rodney and I took the road one brilliant September afternoon for our last jaunt—in the morning we were going back to Bedlam, back to our leashes. At a diverging path, I left the road, but Sir Rodney whined and held back stubbornly, and, understanding what was in his mind, I yielded and returned to our

original course.

"We'll not only go by way of the hotel, Roddy," I said, "but we'll stop in front and watch; and, if we see her, we'll march right up and say hello."

And so we went on toward Elizabeth Ann's. Sir Rodney's favorite game in the old days was to run circles around me in ever-narrowing radius until at last he brought up in a series of somersaults at my feet; his happiness betrayed him into attempting it now. Something within—muscle or tissue—must have snapped, for after a dozen bounds he gave a little cry and came limping back in an attitude of abject apology for the failure of his show.

I had never fancied that dogs—even bulldogs—have souls, yet I somehow found myself offering this one consola-

tion and assurance.

"Don't be afraid, honey," I said, taking the gaunt animal into my arms. "You've been a good boy all your life, and you've got a better chance than the

bad man up the road,"

The poor fellow knew, for he snuggled close, and for the first time in his life seemed afraid. Unashamed of my tears, I laid my face against his, and there by the roadside man and beast spoke long in the silent tongue.

Suddenly the dog twisted himself free, and leaped away from me to the middle of the road, where he stood listening intently; he had heard something so faint that the direction had not been indicated, but, evidently, of immense in-

terest to him.

The sound, louder, came again, and with a bound Sir Rodney was off through the low timber crowning a little ridge that separated the road from "The Devil's Well," a deep, black pond that lay along one side of the hotel grounds like a moat. Fear clutched my heart as I followed, for in the sound I had recognized, faint and smothered, the cry of Elizabeth Ann.

When I reached the top of the ridge and could see the pond Sir Rodney had already plunged in, and was swimming in a circle, barking furiously and frequently thrusting his head beneath the surface. Divesting himself of clothing as he ran, the father had almost reached the scene, but there was no trace of Elizabeth Ann. By the time I came up, the frantic man had rushed in, and, unable to swim a stroke, was drowning a few feet from the shore; his one cry

for help was uttered just before a plank was thrust out to him, and it might have been one of fate's little ironies that the appeal was addressed to the bulldog

swimming near.

Others had come up by this time, and just as we reached out to drag the half-dead man to safety, Sir Rodney gave a strangled cry, plunged forward, and sank from sight; below him, so far beneath the surface that we could not see it, the black, sluggish water was toying with a little white form no longer struggling toward the light. In a few seconds the dog reappeared, and a shout went up when it was seen that his jaws were firmly set in the folds of the little girl's dress; but the gallant rescuer himself was drowning!

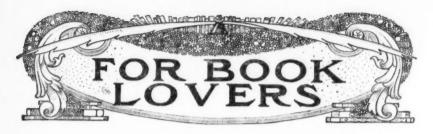
The splashing water and foam about his mouth were crimson, his great eyes protruded from his head until it seemed they must burst, he was fighting like a demon to supply his wounded lungs through his narrow nostrils, yet he did not once relax his hold upon his little friend's dress; and dying, as he was, every ounce of his fast-ebbing strength was being directed intelligently toward bringing his precious burden to safety.

Half a dozen men were in the water to receive them; there was a scene of confusion, then strong arms bore little Elizabeth Ann ashore to be restored to the world of love and sunshine.

But somehow Sir Rodney was not brought in. Once, during the terrible struggle on the steep, slippery ledge, I had hold of one of the dog's silky, rose ears, but lost it when an excited man pitched down upon us; when I returned to the surface my hero chum had slipped away into the black depths of the pool.

Elizabeth Ann was safe and warm in her little white bed when some men, her father directing them, brought to the surface of "The Devil's Well" the dead body of a fawn bulldog. I was at the man's side when he gathered the dripping hulk into his arms, and through my own I saw the tears that streamed down his face as we walked away toward the hotel.

Breaking all precedent, Sir Rodney was about to be received at The Oaks.





OUGHTON, MIFFLIN CO. have just published the second novel of Henry Sydnor Harrison which he calls "Oueed."

Queed is the principal character in the story, a theoretical altruist, abnormally self-centered, a freak who, by all the laws of literary affinity, belongs to William J. Locke. The story is designed to show the humanizing of Queed by the influence of his environment and of the people who are forced by circumstances upon his attention. In the selection of this environment and these people, the author has shown his wisdom, for he writes them with that intimate appreciation and understanding which are possible only with a thorough knowledge of the life of a small Southern city in all its interest and activities. Sharlee Weyland is a delightful and thoroughly capable young woman, Colonel Cowles is a typical, old-time Southern newspaper editor, and Charles Gardiner West a clever twentieth-century business man. As to Queed himself and Professor Nicolovius, the latter the author's ideal of a remorseful and embittered superman, it must be said that they are artificial intellectual conceptions, and lack body and the power to convince.

Mr. Harrison obviously does not fully appreciate this, although he is essentially a humanist himself and not a cold-blooded literary diagnostician. He makes Queed say: "The world's great, wise men-inventors, scientists, philosophers, prophets-have not usually spent their days rubbing elbows with the bricklayer, yet these men have served their race better than all the good fellows that ever lived." Mr. Harrison's sympathies, however, are entirely with the good fellow.

"Don't be content with anything less than success. If you fail, strip off your clothes, and swim out to sea on a sunny day, swim on until your strength fails and you must sink. . . or make your little bow."

"The Moving Finger," by E. Phillips Oppenheim, published by Little, Brown & Co., tells how Bertrand Saton got his start in life with this piece of advice ringing in his ears. Success, at any sacrifice of character and principle thereupon, became his object, the only virtue left to him being his steadfastness of purpose. Befriended by a prophetess of the occult, he develops, from a pupil, to a master of the art of blackmail and fraud, pursuing a career which inevitably leads him into deep water.

As might be supposed, it is his love of a woman which brings about, first, the detection of his criminal life, and, second, his redemption. Through the influence of this woman and that of an aged altruist, he abandons his former life, and goes into the wilderness with his preceptor, and in the end substitutes for the gospel of success the iniunction:

"Don't be afraid of failure. . . There is no real failure if only the spirit is brave. Keep your hands tight on the ladder and your eyes turned toward heaven."

Perhaps Mr. Oppenheim intended this story to teach a moral lesson. It is a new departure for him if this is the case. He is usually content to tell a good story.

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In spite of the fact that "The Way of a Woman," by Rina Ramsay, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., is based upon a wild improbability and is developed by various time-worn fictional devices, it is a story which is made attractive and interesting by the vigor and vivacity with which it is written, its clever characterization, and the rapidity of the action. It is The Duchess modernized.

Admit the premises that an alleged young widow who had never seen her putative husband could impose upon the latter's mother to the extent of passing herself off as her daughter-in-law, and the rest of the story follows naturally

enough.

Susan is a stranded American actress, ill in a Western mining camp when the story opens. She is, however, a young person of old Southern lineage and breeding. A sympathetic sister actress takes pity on her, and arms her with letters and photographs which will identify her as the widow of Sir Barnaby Hill.

Lady Henrietta, the dead baronet's mother, subsequently takes Susan to her heart, and almost immediately the complications begin, for Sir Barnaby returns to correct the false report of his

leath

This statement is sufficient to enable any one to decide for himself whether

it is a story he wants to read.

The tale resounds with the beat of galloping hoofs, for the scene is laid in a hard-riding English county, and there is plenty of slangy, breezy conversation by a group of smart, horsy people.



"A Comedy of Circumstance," by Emma Gavf, published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is a typical story for the young person, with whom it deals almost exclusively. It has caught not only the point of view, but the mode of expression of that same young person with wonderful accuracy. It seems as

though the author must have spent almost as much time and patience in acquiring the latest college boy and girl slang as she would in mastering a new

language.

Yale slang predominates, probably because Angus Carmichael, Billy West, and Luke Strange are Yale heroes. Jane Kent and Nixie Donovan are feminine replicas of the high-spirited and ingenious youths. The purpose of the quintet is to have the best possible time in the best of all possible worlds, and the author sees that they get it.

It is a tale which, in construction, savors more of farce comedy than of the customary novel, and strongly suggests that the author wrote it with eye

to theatrical production.

The characterization of the immature types, ordinarily a difficult task, is clear cut and cleverly sustained, and it is a book which will, no doubt, be heartily welcomed by every prospective débutante and undergraduate.



It is a relief to find occasionally, in the flood, not only of fiction, but of instructions, usually half digested, of how to write it, such a book as "Success in Literature," by William Morris Colles and Henry Cresswell, published

by the Duffield Company.

The authors have wisely refrained from attempting to formulate any rules of their own, purporting to be a short cut to the attainment of "success in literature," a success which is probably the most subtly elusive of all human aims. They have contented themselves with making what is essentially a compilation of "such counsels of writers of renown as might be serviceable to men of letters."

The most striking thing about this book is its tolerance, culture, and breadth of view. It expresses appreciation of the hack as well as the man of genius, freely conceding the usefulness of the former and the inspiration of the latter. It shows, on the part of the authors, their catholicity of taste, their familiarity with a very wide range of

literature, and careful and judicious discrimination in the selection of their authorities.

Cynthia Stockley has written, and published through G. P. Putnam's Sons, another African story, which she calls "The Claw."

As a story, it is not at all bad, but it is not up to the standard which she set for herself in "The Poppy." It is merely a story of what happened to a young Irish-American girl in South Africa at the time of the conquest of Matabeleland when Cecil Rhodes was building the empire of South Africa. The author's purpose was to give an idea of the hold which Africa fastens upon those who take refuge with herin this is the significance of the title, "The Claw"-and to reproduce upon the printed page the atmosphere of the country and the time, and its effect upon human life.

In this she has failed completely; except for some of the episodes which, in their nature, are essentially local, the scene of the tale might have been laid in almost any partially settled country with the same people and the same plot. Besides this the characterization is commonplace. Deirdre Saurien-such a name for the poor girl-has possibilities, and the same might be said of Anthony Kinsella. But the girl, who should be original and spontaneous, is a thoroughly conventional type, and of Kinsella we are not allowed to see enough to be able to tell what manner of man he really is. The plot is that of an average, traditional love story, with the usual complications.



"The Stolen Singer," by Martha Bellinger, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, is a rather lurid melodrama with more of the customary impossibilities of its type.

A prima donna, kidnaped in an automobile as she is leaving Morningside Park in New York one afternoon,

placed aboard a yacht lying off the Chelsea docks, is a startling opening for the story, but it is nothing to what follows. A middle-aged business man, who sees part of what happens at the park, pursues the motor, manages to board the yacht, bent upon the rescue of beauty in distress. The vessel is subsequently wrecked off the coast of Maine, the singer and her would-be rescuer are thrown into the water, and spend a whole night swimming for shore, which they finally reach.

Then begins the explanation of these adventures of Agatha Redmond and Jimmy Hambleton, in the evolution of which Jimmy's cousin, Aleck Van Camp, and a mysterious European princess, known as Melani Regnier, play

important parts.

One might put up with all these absurdities if the story were not so unconscionably strung out. It could have been more acceptably told in about twothirds of its present length.



Important New Books.

"In Her Own Right," John Reed Scott, J. B. Lippincott Co.

"The Long Roll," Mary Johnston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co. "Thorpe's Way," Morley Roberts, Century

Co. "Miss Billy," Eleanor H. Porter, L. C. Page & Co.

"The Old Dance Master," William R. Paterson, Little, Brown & Co.
"The Other Man," Edgar Wallace, Dodd,

Mead & Co. 'The Sovereign Power," Mark Lee Luther.

Macmillan Co. "The Cruise of the Snark," Jack London, Macmillan Co.

"The Woman Haters," Joseph C. Lincoln, D. Appleton & Co. "The Exceptions," Oliver Onions, John

Lane Co.
"The Revolt at Roskellys," William Caine,
G. P. Putnam's Sons.
"Defender of the Faith," Marjorie Bowen,

E. P. Dutton & Co.
"The Legacy," Mary S. Watts, Macmillan

Co. "She Buildeth Her House," Will Levington

Comfort, J. B. Lippincott Co.
"An Ardent American," Mrs. Russell Codman, Century Co.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

CAN you imagine the family of a newly made American millionaire having for their housekeeper an Englishwoman of title, for their lady's maid a young woman of gentle birth and breeding, for their butler—and such a butler!—a young New York man about town with an artistic temperament, and for their chauffeur a foreign nobleman? Rather improbable in real life, but the most natural thing in the world in Henry C. Rowland's romantic satire, "Downstairs." This is one of the cases where a situation absurdly artificial in real life is made really lifelike by art. "Downstairs" is to be the complete novel in AINSLEE's for September.

IN answer to countless letters before they are written we take great pleasure in assuring our readers that the series that concluded with "By the Gate of Allah" in the July number did not conclude Margaretta Tuttle's work for Ainslee's Magazine. This brilliant writer has planned for us a new series of short stories, each complete in itself, woven out of the professional experiences of a fashionable young nerve specialist. The first of these, "Debtor to the Wise," will be printed in Ainslee's for September.

A LONG in the latter part of August if you have become a bit tired of your surroundings, if the mosquitoes become a little worse than you can bear, if the mountain scenery has stayed in the same position a little too long, why don't you seek a change? No, not travel yourself. Far simpler than that. Merely buy a copy of the September AINSLEE'S and let your mind travel. Let William Slavens McNutt take you to Alaska to see the wind-up of his big, sweeping romance, "Kathleen, of Course"; follow James Oliver Curwood's resourceful hero to South America where, in order to

persuade a hard-headed financier to become his father-in-law, he inflates "The Great Argentina Bubble": let Nalbro Bartley set you down in the middle of a stirring tale of love and narrowly averted tragedy in the Philippines, "The Scratch." Olive M. Briggs' story of "The Green Turquoise" will lead you into mysterious India, Leila Burton Wells will relate the triumph that a plain girl achieved in Washington society with the aid of a worldly-wise aunt and "A Bit of Paint and Powder," while Elliott Flower and Courtney Ryley Cooper take you into our own West with their stories of "Pat the Peaceful" and "An Experiment in Living." If, however, the mosquitoes absolutely refuse to let your mind wander, there are two little stories that will make life a joy right where you are. "The Cataclysm," by Louise Lennard, is as delightful a bit of humor as you are apt to find in any part of the world, while "Largely Jewelry"--well, "Largely Jewelry" is one of Frank Condon's best.

Stories by Carrington Phelps, May Edginton, Jane W. Guthrie, and Owen Oliver round out the fiction in an unusually strong number.

CHARMING gown on a charming woman attracts less attention than a dowdy dress on an otherwise charming woman, or a charming gown on an otherwise dowdy woman. We seem to take it for granted that the charming woman shall be charmingly gowned. The same is true of a magazine and its dress. We venture that most of our readers take our covers for granted, vaguely feeling that in a general way they are pleasingly appropriate to the tone of the contents. Did you ever stop to think that almost every color artist of note to-day has contributed covers to AINSLEE'S? We confess that we ourselves, were surprised when we glanced over the list recently: Howard Chandler Christie, Harrison Fisher, lames Montgomery Flagg, Alonzo Kimball, C. Allan Gilbert, Clarence Underwood, Les.

ter Ralph, Penrhyn Stanlaws, A. B. Wenzell, Ch. Weber Ditzler, Henry Hutt, Philip Boileau, The Kinneys, John Cecil Clay, Frank H. Leyendecker, and others of equal distinction.

32

THE words "volunteer" and "voluntary" are used in various senses. An old veteran once told us that he had been drafted into "the volunteers," but that when his term of service was up he had volunteered in "the regulars."

Perhaps you have heard it said that AINS-LEE'S is one of the very few magazines with a "voluntary" circulation. In this sense "voluntary" means that AINSLEE'S does not go into club offers with other magazines at reduced rates; it does not offer the slightest reduction for yearly subscriptions; it does not even publish continued storics with a view to leading its readers on to the next number. Each number makes its own appeal, and each copy is sold for the full price.

For a poor magazine this would undoubtedly be poor policy. For a good magazine we believe that it is good policy. We believe that it is good policy for AINSLEE'S.

38

YOU will notice at the conclusion of this an announcement offering twenty-five dollars for the best letter complying with certain conditions. We trust that no one will interpret this as an attempt to measure in money the value of your letters to AINS-LEE'S. The little notes of encouragement and kindly criticism that we daily receive from our readers are invaluable.

WITY-FROM YOUR VIEW-POINT-IS

AINSLEE'S

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will be paid November 1, 1911, to the person sending the best letter covering the above.

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CONDITIONS OF THIS CONTEST:

Letters must not contain more than two hundred (200) words and must be in our hands not later than October I, 1911.

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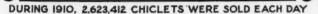
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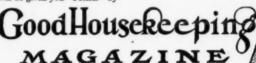
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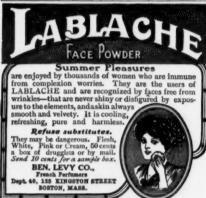
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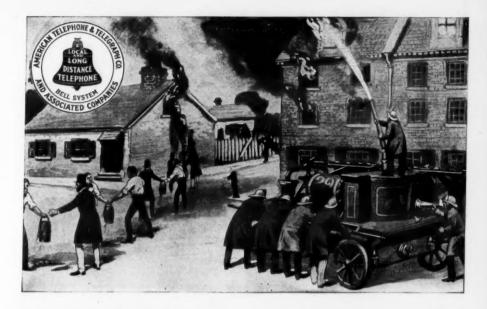
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It allows five shots—all under about control, for rapid or deliberate fire. Three to get the cripples.

The action is simple, powerful and sure. The trigger pull is smooth and easy. The hammer is light and quick. Part of the recoil. ordinarily absorbed by the shooter's shoulder, is gized to operate the mechanism. Not one single sunce of muzzle energy is lost.

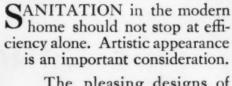
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Remington-UMC—the perfect shooting combination

REMINGTON ARMS-UNION METALLIC CARTRIDGE CO.
299 Broadway New York City

SUATRO PLUMBING FIXTURES



The pleasing designs of "Standard" lavatories aid greatly in the making of the bathroom beautiful.

The high reputation and increasing demand for "Standard" guaranteed plumbing fixtures have led to widespread substitution of inferior goods. Be sure, therefore, that you specify "Standard" fixtures, not verbally, but in writing, and make certain that they are installed.

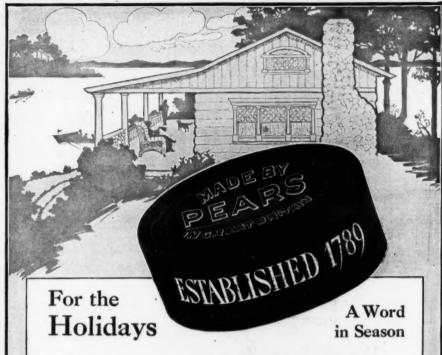
Genuine "Standard" fixtures for the Home and for Schools, Office Buildings, Public Institutions, etc., are identified by the Green and Gold Label, with the exception of baths bearing the Red and Black Label which, while of the first quality of manufacture, have a slightly thinner enameling, and thus meet the requirements of those who demand "Standard" quality at less expense. All "Standard" fixtures with care will last a lifetime. And, no fixture is genuine unless it bears the guarantee label.

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It is well to remember that in going from home, changed conditions of existence are temporarily experienced, which often act unpleasantly upon the skin. This may make what would otherwise be an enjoyable holiday an uncomfortable one.

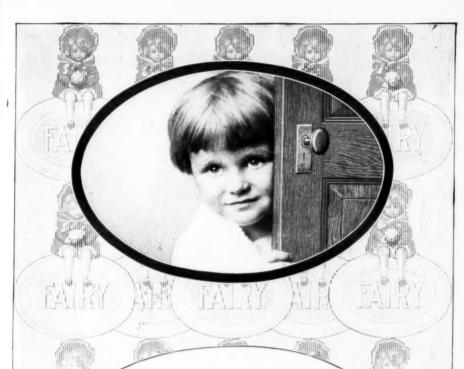
The best safeguard against skin troubles of this kind is to wash the skin frequently and freely with PEARS' SOAP which protects the skin by its soft, pleasant, emollient action, and at the same time ensures the fullest beauty of complexion of which the skin is capable; that is why it is called the Beauty Soap.

The greatest skin specialists and the most celebrated beauties of the last 100 years have testified that in hygienic and beautifying properties no soap has ever equalled Pears

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